

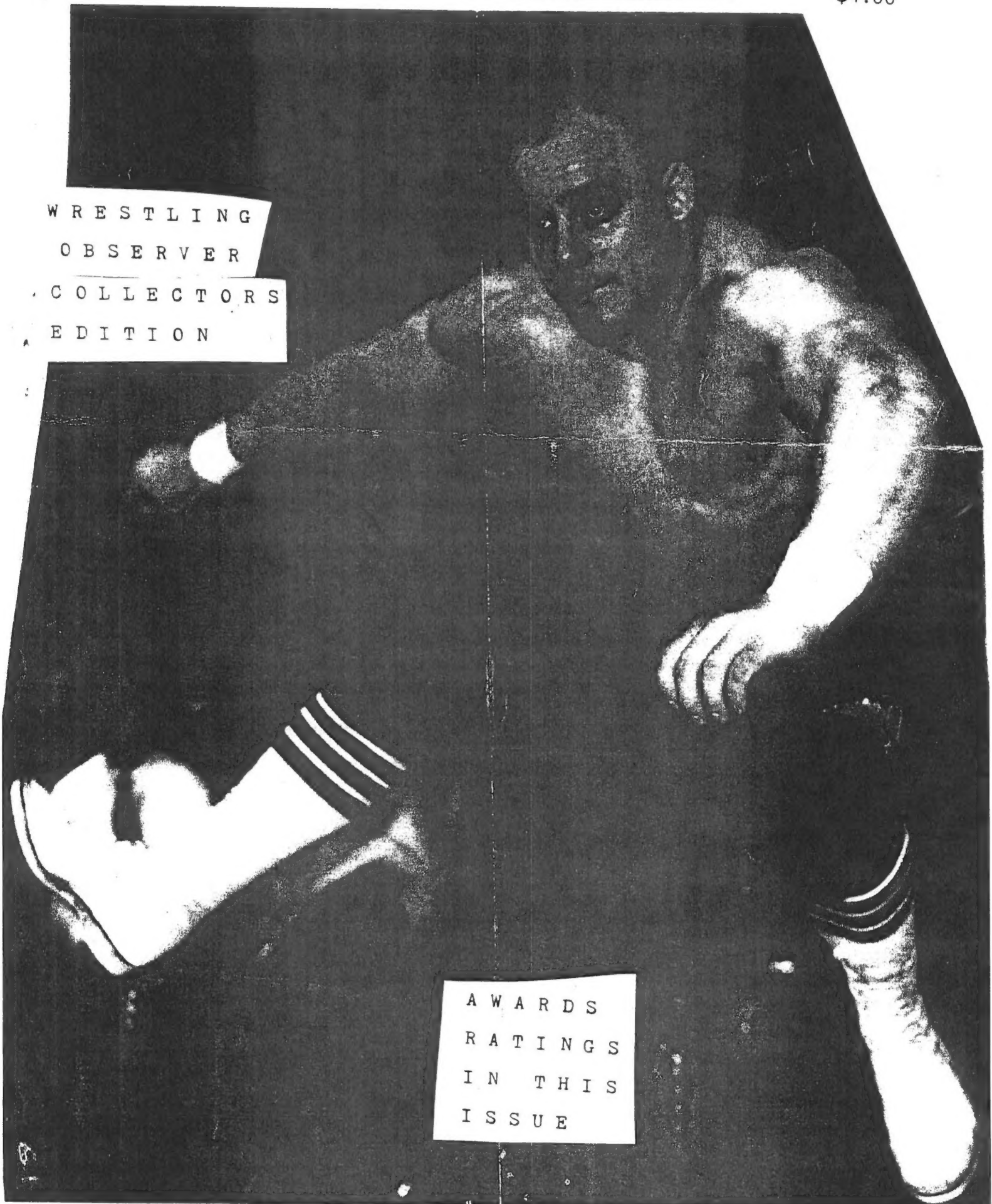
The Wrestler



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WRESTLING
OBSERVER
COLLECTORS
EDITION

AWARDS
RATINGS
IN THIS
ISSUE



EDITOR'S NOTES

I'd like to welcome everyone to the 1984 Wrestling Observer yearbook. For those who have never read the Observer before, it is an every three week publication covering the wrestling world. A general issue contains more photos and more news than this issue, however some things have been cut back in order to include reference material from the past year.

For long-time readers, I'd like to thank you for another year of support. The list of correspondents and those who have helped make this publication the top one in North America is endless. There are many whose names should appear but won't for obvious reasons. However I would like to thank Masayuki Osada, Terry Dart, James Koog, Ken Onyschuk, Mike Pochuski, Bob Closson, Roland Messier, Pete Lederberg, Rich Dorf, Kevin Hancer, Dave Creedon, Kurt Brown, Derek Sousa, Pete Jarvis, Jimmy Berkeley, Grant Zwarych, Jim Ross, Steve Helwagen, Marvin Joel Rubin, Jim Cook, George Wilkinson, Ron Dobratz, Haruo Yamaguchi, Don Jackson, Howard Rogofsky, Ralph Repoli, Jim Schmidt, Norm Keitzer, Mike Rodgers, Larry Lovell, Jay Steele, Walt Wolansky, John Jance, Steve Kornreich, Norm Dooley, Mark Nulty, Kit Bauman, Danny Novak, Howard Lapes, Allan Buresz, Fumi Saito, Carlos Rey, Tom Young, John Murton, Tim Guentert, Steve Munari, Darrell Bruff, Mike King, Robert Hernandez, Lowest Lane, Steve Luther, David Williamson, Mike Sapp, Mark Vellois, Terrence Malachuk, Vic Sherberg and so many others. I would also like to make special mention of Mr. Mike who has gone far, far beyond the call of duty and friendship in helping out this publication, and Koichi Yoshizawa who has supplied me with all sorts of photos and information over the past two years.

As you can read elsewhere in the bulletin, I had a chance to visit Japan in early December and would like to thank Koichi and his family, Masayuki Osada, Haruo Yamaguchi, Wally Yamaguchi, Jimmy Suzuki and many others for their hospitality in making sure I never got lost and never had to eat any spam, and knew which museums to visit and what type of food to eat.

The next issue of the Observer will be dated February 4 and will be a regular sized issue, roughly 28 pages, and cost \$2.50. Deadline for regular material would be January 23 and late info for the update is due Sunday, January 27. For those wishing to contact me via phone, I'm most easily accessible between 5:30 and 7 p.m. most weeknights and most of the day Sunday at 408-268-2198.

If an "X" appears at the left it means this is the final issue of the WRESTLING OBSERVER on your current subscription. To re-order send \$2.50 for the February 4 issue or \$7.25 for a three issue subscription to Dave Meltzer, 6562 Winterset Way, San Jose, California 95120.

As for the future of this publication, I will say that I will almost surely be doing a publication of sorts for the foreseeable future (until all good circuits are destroyed--right now we're down to four, or five). I don't know how extensive the Observer will be six months down the road, if only because my stamina and enthusiasm toward the business continues to wane. However, the point is, I most definitely still enjoy a hard style of wrestling and some comedy as well, and writing about something I enjoy is easy and pleasurable.

In this issue are the results of the fifth annual Observer awards poll. We received a record 157 ballots this year (not to mention 10 more received the day after deadline which actually would have changed the results in one category and had a fairly solid change in the order in another). I'd like to thank everyone for their time and effort in helping with this survey.

A few notes for TV fans, that masterpiece of malarky, Tuesday Night Titans has been switched to Friday's. Check your local newspapers for the time although I know the channel is the USA network. I think it's at 8 p.m. Eastern and 5 p.m. Pacific and has been cut to one hour, which is a positive step even if it will now be aired three times per month. Tuesday will now be a showcase of "Prime Time Wrestling." In other words the net result is more Titan wrestling on the airwaves. No reason to complain, if it's too much, we just don't have to watch. As soon as wrestling reaches the saturation point the numbers on the individual shows will begin to drop and cutbacks will occur. The cutbacks will more greatly affect local promotions than Titan, because even if Titan lost, say 70 percent of its cable time, it would still have enough for promotional purposes.

Since I'm skipping my normal column this month (lack of enthusiasm), I should mention that we're now beginning year two of the War of the Wrestling World. After a year I seem to have firmly grasped the Vinnie Plan of attack.

The plan, of course, is to make wrestling so ridiculous and bizarre so as to get a "cult" audience who enjoys it because poor taste is in. This audience goes beyond the typical fan, and in fact if he has his way, would exclude the typical fan. Because of that, such things as work rate and good matches aren't important because he's appealing to an audience looking for bizarreness.

Athletic ability is something to be frowned on (look at the treatment genuine wrestlers have gotten from Titan this past year). Although there were rough times during the year, it appears if these past few weeks are any indication (usually they are a bad indication because crowds are naturally inflate during Christmas vacation period) '85 could be successful. He's got his audience right now. Whether this "cult" audience will leave when the next Rocky Horror Picture show comes around or not is something we'll be able to review in history three years down the road. I see 1985 as a year where the mass media will pick up on wrestling, both in a positive and negative tone. I know of three books on the subject to be released in the upcoming year (will give details upon their release). In addition, three other books have been recently released on the subject although I haven't seen any of them and am told none of the three are worth reading.

Like many fads, the media will write about the "wrestling resurgence" when in fact there is no resurgence. The big year was '83, and crowds are down throughout in '84. Although there will be successes and failures in '85, I think for the most part it's going to be a tough year for most promoters. They'll have to deal with less talent (the incoming talent just isn't there in the U.S.) and TV glut.

Of course many people in the business are openly talking about McMahon's empire undergoing a catastrophe in '85. I've received information in both directions and just don't know what to think. I keep hearing the same report, that Titan's losses in '84 were between \$5 and \$7 million. It's possible, but I don't buy it. With the crowds they draw in the Northeast, if they're losing that kind of money it must be because of mis-management which is of course a possibility. I do know that for the most part the payoffs are lower now than they were earlier in the year. What's to say those losses aren't "planted rumors" so they'll be justified in cutting pay. What's to say they aren't true.

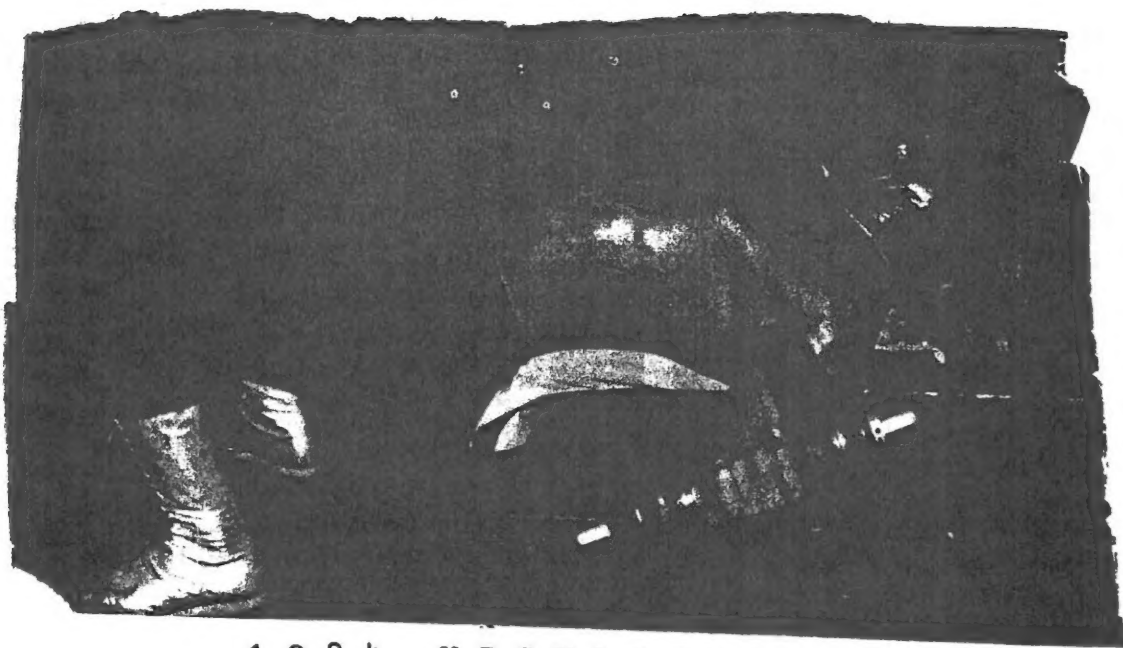
The next few pages will have brief features on the leading news stories on '84, the annual Observer readers ratings and results of the '84 poll.

A few more quick notes before I go. I'm beginning to understand why Titan has and will continue to hold back its genuine talents. The Titan show isn't designed for wrestling fans, thus wrestling isn't given. However the fans in attendance will become fans of wrestling if they see wrestling. Seeing wrestling action that talented guys can give will expose the untalented main eventers. Since the fans don't know what they're missing, why smarten them up.

One more comment about my feelings on what's going on that probably differs from many readers. I don't blame McMahon for trying to promote all over the country. Competition should benefit the fan, although it really doesn't as we've learned. I don't blame him for trying to hoarde all the top talent, although it would be nice if he made better use of some of them. Actually I've noticed a change in that aspect. Orton's main eventing now, Orndorff isn't wasted. Hart is, but under the present marketing plan, a talented gimmick-less wrestler will have to be relegated to prelims. I do blame him for the planned overexposure of wrestling, feeling that the result of it, cancellation of many wrestling programs because of ratings problems, will in the long run benefit him. If he can create an environment where fans are satisfied with nine "instant" (less than 5:00) matches, more power to him. He's already lost me as a fan, but as I've said before, there will be newcomers to take my place.

A lot of readers seem to take the position other promotions are blameless because McMahon, the bad guy, stole their talent. Mostly I'm hearing this from fans of the Crocketts, who I admit did a great job with their territory until the early part of this past year. The Crocketts are hardly blameless for the poor talent pool they now have. It isn't McMahon's fault that the Crocketts haven't kept pace in \$ to their talent. During competition, salaries will rise which I feel is good for the wrestlers, since many aren't paid all that well. By refusing to acknowledge that competition and keeping pace, that is why the Crocketts have lost so much talent. Their attitude of sitting back and waiting for McMahon's company to go bankrupt while using inexperienced weightlifters and egomaniacal, overweight slobs on top is the problem. Of course, if McMahon goes bankrupt this year, then time will prove their approach was the correct one.

Starting this issue, when running down cards I will often rate matches from zero (or even in some cases negative) stars to a maximum of five stars. I "stole" this system from Norm Dooley and it will make it easier to determine the quality of matches rather than endless--this was fantastic, this was horrible, this was so-so comments. Briefly, a dud match is one without any redeeming social value. Five stars is for something stupendous. I may see eight or nine five star matches per year. A negative rating means not only was the match worthless, but obnoxiously bad. $\frac{1}{2}$ * is for a terrible match, but at least there was a high spot or something. * is a bad match. $\frac{1}{2}$ * is below average but tolerable; ** average; $\frac{1}{2}$ ** kind of good; *** Quite good; $\frac{1}{2}$ *** almost great; **** excellent; $\frac{1}{2}$ **** better than you can ask for.



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HULKAMANIA

Titan Sports got the "war of '84" started in a big way in late November 1983 when Vince McMahon Sr., while on a tour of Japan, offered Hulk Hogan a lucrative deal and the W.W.F. World's championship to get him to defect from the A.W.A.

Things happened in a hurry at that point. With no fair warning, Bob Backlund dropped the W.W.F. crown to the Iron Sheik in Madison Square Garden on December 26, 1983. The Hulk and Gene Okerlund were introduced just days later on a TV taping done in St. Louis.

The subsequent Madison Square Garden show, on January 23, 1984, saw Hulk win the title stopping Sheik in just 5:00 before 26,092 fans which packed both the Garden and the Felt Forum with thousands turned away.

Visually Hogan made the perfect World champion. He was 6-foot-5, 280 pounds, tanned and bleached blonde. In addition he had gained some fame among Titan Sports' new target group, the young, easily manipulated rock audience which for the most part had shunned pro wrestling. Hogan played the role of "Thunderlips," a World champion wrestler in the box office smash Rocky III. After that movie, Hogan had become the game's biggest attraction leading the A.W.A. to a record 1983.

For the most part, Hogan's title reign has been a disappointment. He drew tremendously well the first few months as champion in the Northeast. In other parts of the country, his drawing power wasn't that noticable from the beginning. Things got worse as the year progressed as he was run ragged by his travel schedule and began to talk like he wanted out.

His matches were the subject of the most criticism. Closely scrutinized as champion, it became evident he was severely lacking in the two areas most World champs are noted for, stamina and wrestling ability. Every match looked like a repeat performance. Hogan would get kicked around, bleed, then comes the infamous leg drop out of nowhere and it's over, usually in less than 10:00.

But the critical few aside, Hogan remained arguably the most popular wrestler in the world. As legend has it, his ego grew with the popularity and on June 14 his refusal to suffer a legit loss to Antonio Inoki in Japan caused the Japanese star to come up with an ending to a match so bizarre that the normally mild Japanese fans literally tore down the Kuramae Kokugian Sumo Hall in Tokyo after the match.

DAVID VON ERICH 1958-1984

Genuine tragedy struck pro wrestling on February 10, 1984 when 25-year-old David Von Erich died in his Tokyo hotel room, apparently due to a severe case of enteritis. The enteritis caused dehydration, which led to a fatal heart attack.

Von Erich, the second oldest son of Dallas promoter Fritz Von Erich (Jack Adkisson), was touring Japan to groom him for eventually winning the N.W.A. World's championship.

The popularity of the Von Erich family in the Dallas area was such that the death was carried on the front page of more than one newspaper. The subsequent funeral, which saw an estimated 3,500 fans attend and was called the largest ever in Denton County, was also front page news. A record was released shortly after, a nice but exploitative song, "Heaven Needed A Champion." KXTX-TV in Dallas filmed a one hour special for airing on its World Class Wrestling TV show.

As the final tribute, a David Von Erich Memorial pro wrestling show was held May 6 in Texas Stadium before 32,123 fans live and several thousand more watching on closed circuit sites. David's younger brother Kerry was given the World championship match which was promised to David before his death, and pinned Ric Flair to earn the title. Kerry Von Erich's title reign was very short, ending on May 24 in the Yokosuka Gym when he dropped two of three falls back to Flair.

GEORGIA TAKEOVER

Georgia Championship Wrestling was synonymous among mat fans with the term Superstation. The two hours of N.W.A. wrestling on Saturday was the top-rated show on cable TV from the days Ch. 17 out of Atlanta changed its call letters from WTCG to WTBS. Ratings grew until 1982 when the show, by then re-named World Championship Wrestling, was getting a nationwide 7 rating, higher than any sport except football and bowling on a week-by-week basis.

The next year saw the ratings slip as a series of promotional blunders eroded interest. By the spring of 1984, two of the largest shareholders, Jack and Jerry Brisco returned to Atlanta to try and regain control. A power struggle ensued with the Briscos losing out. The Briscos wanted to sell their stock to the highest bidder, who turned out to be Titan Sports' own Vince McMahon. McMahon liquidated the Cape Cod Coliseum to pay the Briscos, then after a short court fight, took control of GCW with the additional shares controlled by Jim Barnett, already a Titan employee who was also forced out of the Atlanta office.

The W.W.F., which had already controlled wrestling on the USA network, then added the most-watched wrestling show in the country. While ratings have slipped slightly since the takeover, the W.W.F. show remains a big hit.

Within a few weeks, however, the remnants of the old Atlanta promotion including general manager Ole Anderson were back in business under the name "Championship Wrestling from Georgia, Inc." They even got back on WTBS, albeit with an early Saturday a.m. time slot.

Two other major takeovers by Titan Sports in '84 were the Calgary promotion bought from Stu Hart in August, and the Toronto promotion. The latter was accomplished by a straight deal between McMahon and Jack Tunney, in June, necessitated by N.W.A. short-sightedness.

THE FIRST JAPANESE CHAMP

The Japanese pro wrestling world boasted of its first long-term World champion in 1984 when Tomomi "Jumbo" Tsuruta downed A.W.A. king Nick Bockwinkel before 13,000 fans in Tokyo on February 23.

Although Japan had boasted a few short term champs, Giant Baba held the N.W.A. crown on three occasions for about a week apiece, and Antonio Inoki held the W.W.F. crown for a week in late 1979, however no Japanese wrestler had ever toured the U.S. with a major World title.

Tsuruta made two U.S. tours as champion before losing the title on the final night of the second go-round, May 13 in St. Paul to Rick Martel.

For the most part, Tsuruta wasn't appreciated by U.S. audiences who have been accustomed to Japanese heels since World War II.

Martel, who was given the championship in order to keep him from jumping to the W.W.F., has kept the title for eight months but has yet to really win audiences over as well. While his genuine wrestling ability, speed, agility and overall conditioning are excellent, he is an inconsistent performer in the ring. In addition, the certain magic a World champ should have, that something special, is sorely lacking.

RETURN OF THE TIGER

On April 23, 1981 young Japanese wrestler Satoru Sayama made his return from a world-wide training tour wearing the outfit of a cartoon hero, "Tiger Mask." Tiger Mask, as he was known, defeated the Dynamite Kid and before the year was out, had exceeded any expectations in him as both a wrestler and as a popular drawing card.

By the end of 1982, Tiger Mask was the most important wrestler in Japan. He established a new dimension in Japanese wrestling, as the smaller, highly skilled and acrobatic star of the jr. heavyweight division.

Before 1983 was over, Tiger Mask was no more. A series of bitter events saw him retire from wrestling at the age of 26, and later expose to the press that his reasons were because his wrestling income was being used, without his consent, to finance New Japan head honcho Antonio Inoki's losing cattle feeding business in Brazil.

Sayama then unmasked and made his living as chief instructor at "Tiger Gym," a martial arts training center. But the wrestling bug has returned. Negotiations for him to return to wrestling in March at Madison Square Garden seemed completed, until intervention by Inoki's company caused the cancellation of his return.

At that time Sayama had agreed to return as the top drawing card of the new Universal Wrestling Federation, formed by his former adversary Hisashi Shinma. Sayama, through business manager Shoji Sogawa, pulled out of the UWF before it's scheduled April debut, because Shinma's promised MSG bout had fallen through.

With the UWF in danger of going under, Sogawa called a power play. He would agree to let Sayama return for two matches and work freelance for others provided the UWF rid itself of its founder Mr. Shinma. This was partially Sogawa's revenge since Shinma had accused him of being a gangster. The UWF felt for survival that Sayama was more important than Shinma. The wrestlers themselves of the UWF, all basically dissatisfied with pro wrestling for various reasons, decided to change the wrestling style within the group to a form of combat known as strong-style wrestling. After Sayama worked the two matches, he decided to join UWF full-time and sever ties with Sogawa. This, however, would break a binding contract the two had. Apparently UWF President Nobuo Urata and a noted gang leader visited Sogawa and threatened to kill him if he wouldn't give up his control over Sayama. News of all this went public in November when Urata was arrested, and later prosecuted for his threats. This news killed the groups chance for long-term survival because no TV network would touch them.

However because of the style and due to Sayama, who now wrestles under the name Super Tiger, the group has established a strong and loyal base of fans, particularly in the Tokyo area.

JUMP

Starting with Hulk Hogan, the biggest news throughout '84 concerned who was the latest wrestler to jump. Titan Sports made an aggressive campaign to lure the most marketable (and often the least talented) wrestlers to their stable.

Many of the "jumpers" became important W.W.F. stars, most notably Roddy Piper who came in from the Carolinas on January 2. As the year went on the defection to Titan list grew including Blackjack Mulligan, Barry Windham, Mike Rotundo, Kimala, The Freebirds, Junkyard Dog, Mad Dog Vachon, Jesse Ventura, David Shults, Billy Jack, announcer Gene Okerlund, Greg Valentine, Bob Orton, Buzz Sawyer and many others.

Many didn't last long. The Freebirds wrestled a few dates beginning in August, but didn't go full-time until early September. By the end of the month, they were gone. Kimala didn't last much longer, citing travel weariness. Ventura was stopped by a blood clot in the lung and missed three months. Vachon proved to be completely useless, except in a few A.W.A. cities. Billy Jack only lasted three days, before Titan's not coming through with a promised announcing job to his mentor Stan Stasiak caused him to leave. Sawyer was fired because personal problems caused him to miss more bouts than he made.

Many others as the year went on jumped from Titan Sports. The Masked Superstar was the first, and he's seen little action in the U.S. since his departure. Tony Atlas left for the A.W.A. and in a bizarre twist, returned several months later. Sgt. Slaughter left at the end of the year, but he may even return. Of the guys picked up with the Atlanta promotion, only Niccoli Volkoff remains viable. Les Thornton and Mr. Wrestling II are for the most part invisible and Mike Sharpe left rather quickly. The Calgary crew didn't last long either. Bret Hart is still around but Davey Boy Smith and Dynamite Kid aren't.

But the biggest set of mass jumpings occurred in late September and Titan Sports had nothing to do with it, although one noted wrestling magazine would like us to believe bad-guy Vince's deal with Inoki was going to force Riki Choshu and company to take a pay cut. Could even be true, but if so, it's a secret here.

Riki Choshu and ten other buddies left Antonio Inoki's New Japan group for Giant Baba's group. In one fell swoop they changed the balance of power in Japanese wrestling from one strongly favoring Inoki, to one where Inoki is in deep trouble and some even speculate on his way out of the ballpark.

ROCK'N'WRESTLING - TUESDAY NIGHT TITANS - OVEREXPOSURE

1984 saw the debut of wrestling's first national talk show, Tuesday Night Titans on the USA network. Naturally the show was a ratings smash, at least in comparison to the miniscule ratings the beleaguered cable network gets for legitimate sports.

The show also gave wrestling more media exposure than anything in years, and a surprising amount was favorable. It seems critics love when wrestling tries to be a clown show, unlike some promotions who do so unintentionally.

Rock'n'wrestling was hardly a new idea. Former rock star Jimmy Hart had worked in Memphis as a manager for five years. However Cyndi Lauper was a hot commodity, and although her much-hyped appearance in Wendy Richter's corner for the girls title change drew the smallest Garden crowd in a while, her presence was a media breakthrough and we'll see more of her in '85.

We'll also see more wrestling. In one year from two hours to 23 hours weekly of mat mumbo jumbo, and in '85 we'll find out how much oversaturation the TV people will take before they begin excreting low rated shows left and right.

AWA FINISHING YEAR STRONG; WWF FINISHED:

Of course, the WWF isn't finished. Judging from November, for the first time the AWA had clear momentum over the WWF here in the Twin Cities, but we finished the year with a stalemate.

When we left off, the AWA had a card on Thanksgiving "headlined" by champ Rick Martel vs. Billy Robinson (ugh), plus the Road Warriors vs. Jerry Blackwell and King Kong Bundy. They were coming off a near sellout in October. The WWF offered a new gag, the "Turkey tournament" cage Battle Royal, plus a sure draw, Old Dog Vachon vs. Georgie Steele. Would the fans stay with the AWA minus Bruiser Brody (in Japan) or would they buy Vinnie's brainstorm, which would be the WWF's first non-Hogan show out here. The Mat Morons spoke loud and clear.

The WWF hyped their tourney incessantly. They paraded before us all kinds of Whiff Stiffs, many of whom turned out to be no-shows. They made the fatal mistake in having no interesting undercard. They spoke of "eight other great matches," naming none of them. Of course they were all typical squash matches, as they continue to confuse quantity with quality. On 11/25, they drew 3,000 fans, and the entire night was considered a total dud. John Studd and Bobby Heenan were "Co-Turkeys," no big surprise and nobody really cared either. Jimmy Snuka was the first man out, becoming 50 realistic grand richer. That's a lot more than the entire gate. The best of all was local TV coverage, with two stations both ranking heavily. One said, "a real turkey tonight with a poor crowd, bad matches and bad endings." The other said, "more action in a chess tournament than there was tonight." I loved it. This was a major disappointment for the WWF. I dare say Hogan's importance locally was made clear, as is the importance of good matchmaking.

Our Christmas-time (12/29) show was the same as everyone's, Hulk vs Sheik (an incredible yawn), Briscos vs Adonis-Murdoch (no doubt a great chance for a good match), Richter vs Judy Martin (I give them credit for trying to push the girls, even if it's a futile effort).

The best pre-tournament interview was Angelo Mosca's, who turned out to be Mr. Mike's favorite no-show. He and Mean Gene were speaking of the \$50,000 prize with this exchange:

Mosca: "Fifty grand! I can get an early retirement. . .

Gene: Well, I dunno if you'd want to...

Mosca: Maybe buy something on Lake Minnetonka with our good friend!

Gene: On the West End!

Mosca: On the West End. I'd love to buy something on Lake Minnetonka. I know people who walk across that lake, right on the water and I want to meet that person on the other side with 50 grand in my pocket.

Verne Gagne, of course, lives on the West End of Lake Minnetonka. The level of weirdness in WWF interviews isn't to be believed. Gene and Ken Patera's are especially bizarre. Okerlund keeps bringing up Waukesha, Wis., the scene of Patera and Mr. Saito's escapade last May. "The nightmare of Waukesha...maybe you should be mayor." Ken, when discussing the cage for the tourney said: "It's like being in jail. I know. I've been there. Nine hours baby, false arrest." On and on it goes, just like the WWF.

Once again Greg Gagne, this time with Ken Resnick, appeared on radio call-in show "Sportsline." It was more nonsense as usual, but Mr. Mike could no longer resist. Toward the show's end I get my cue:
MM: "Greg, I have a serious question. I've heard that two of my favorite wrestlers, the Dynamite Kid and Davey Boy Smith have left the WWF and they'll be available after the current tag team tourney. My questions are What do you think of these guys and Will the AWA make any effort to book these tremendous talents?"

Greg: "...Ahh, I've seen them once or twice. I'm not real familiar with them. I did meet them once after a match. It's hard to tell on TV, but they're pretty small. I don't know how they'd do against some of the big wrestlers here in the AWA."

I tried to retort to that nonsense by pointing out to Greg he's hardly one to talk about wrestlers being too small. But while he's talking, I'm cut off. I'll have to let it slide for now. Even Greg's entitled to his jaundiced opinion.

I avoided the Thanksgiving AWA show, but Mr. Mike #2 attended it. The biggest surprise was the crowd, another near sellout of 17,000. What was the draw?

It might have been the title match with Martel vs. Robinson, but then again it could have been the opener with Tom Zenk. The tag title of the Roadies vs. Blackwell-Bundy sounded like fun, but I hardly thought it would fill the place. It was important, but I'm afraid the main draw must have been Reggie's long-awaited return against that hated rat, Sheik Kaisey in a cage.

The only surprise or fun centered around that match. Sheik came out with

a surprise, the Masked Superstar. Predictably Sheik tried to get out of the match, but of course Wally Karbo would have none of that. It did allow Superstar to be at cage-side, which is the point. The match was average. I don't even think Greg bled. It went 10:00 with Greg on the offensive about the entire bout. Greg slaps the sleeper on. Wally Karbo, the keeper of the cage door key, makes toward the door, key in hand ("I knew as soon as Greg put on the Gon-yay sleeper the match was over"). Superstar then grabs the key, shoves Wally and enters the cage to attack Greg. Two-on-one only briefly, Jerry Blackwell, rolling down the aisle before Superstar had even entered the cage, joined in and cleared out the heels. The crowd generally dug it.

Superstar was never referred to by name. Most fans had no idea who he was. It's nice when even Mondo Maniacs are surprised by a promotional twist. The prospect of Superstar being here isn't displeasing, but it's unclear what his role will be.

Anyway, the whole schtick was to keep alive the Brody-Blackwell-Sheik feud, with Greggie now logically (?) included. This all sets up Christmas. The Mondo Mob had procured their tickets early. I wanted to attend because 1) Brody would be there; and 2) unless things changed, it would be the last card I could stand attending until we're deep into '85. As it turns out, I was right about No. 2.

The local TV show finally ran the Rick Martel/Jimmy Garvin farce from Winnipeg, so their grudge showdown would be a featured main event. Also a big showdown between the Roadies and Fabs. To counteract the presence of Paul Ellering, the Fabs announced they'd have their own manager, a bow-tie and suspenders decked out Crusher. What an original idea. At least that's what I thought five months ago when the scenario was suggested by Crippler Kevin Hancer in his wrestling bulletin, copies of which arrive at the local office. They were doing this in every city, most of the time with Baron Von Raschke doing the chores, so I had no interest.

How do you destroy the awesome impact of the great Brody? Simple. Put him in the ring with Greg Gagne. It was obvious a tag bout would result from Thanksgiving. They announced it was Brody and Sheik against the surprise team of Greggie and Blackwell. Reliable word was that Brody would team with Superstar, which of course, was announced the week before the show. (Sheik had a note from his doctor excusing him because of his "broken arm")

I was ambivalent. Seeing Brody live is always a treat, but against Greg? We know Brody's not going to kill Greg. Brody is said to like it here, or at least like the paydays here. The thought of Brody selling for Greg is almost too much to stomach. The reality was just as bad.

I didn't enjoy anything on the show. The worst, in the repulsive sense was the Brody match for the reasons stated. Watching Brody in the corner getting pounded by Greg, take a few dropkicks and completely avoid putting any hurt on Greg was awful. The match was 10:00 and just okay. Brody and Blackwell spent most of the time with adequate brawling. It seemed too rushed. The end was fun.

Jimmy "Hitchhiker" Mitchell was the ref, and he was "knocked cold" by Superstar. Greg & Jerry throw a double dropkick on Brody and Superstar respectively. Blackwell gives Brody a nice powerslam and falls on him for the count. No ref. Crowd goes nuts. Brody throws Blackwell off, staggers to Kaissey who hands him an object, a quick shot to the throat, Blackwell goes down, the ref quickly in position. The crowd is pissed. We're bemused. Will we ever see Brody take a pin?

The three heels beat up on Greg & Jerry until help arrives in the form of Jim Brunzell, the High Flyers are reunited.

I was ready to go home, but we still had two main events left. Martel and Garvin was a pretty good 12:00 with very good high spots. End was good, Precious slips Garvin an object, Jim decks Martel, tucks it under his armpit and gets the count. Garvin grabs the belt. Wally "Law and Order" Karbo (with knowledge gained first hand) grabs the belt, lifts Garvin's hand exposing the object and proclaims, "There'll be none of this kind of going on in WA title matches," implying it's quite alright any other time. All I wonder about is what Garvin is going to slip Precious.

Roadies and Fabs was only bad, not awful. They are working together a little better because, as rumor has it, 1) The Roadies don't have as much disdain for the Fabs; and 2) It behooves them all to give a decent performance. I also suspect the Roadies can be more tolerant because the Fabs are on the way out. Anyway, Crush is going to get involved which is reason enough to leave early.

It's the same ending as every other city. Ellering trips one of the Fabs as he comes off the ropes. The heretofore immobile Crusher begins to chase Ellering around the ring as Paul struggles not to lap the old boy. They end up in the ring and ref Ed Sharkey wisely throws the match out.

The crowd was a near sellout, which needs an explanation. This was "Prince Week" at the Civic Center. The midget rock superstar's stage blocked one end of the arena and 4,000 seats. The crowd was about 13,000. On TV the next week the crowd was a 19,000 sellout. See!

Saturday was WWF night. I thought it would draw a decent 6-7,000 but they kicked butt with a crowd of at least 13,000 (10,800 paid). Obviously people aren't sick of the WWF yet. I largely attribute this to the good hijinx on the "Championship" TV show, especially the Andre haircut.

Andre's tag match was surprisingly action packed with lots of work, even by the elephant. Results saw Haiti Kid pin Sky Low Low, Atlas pinned Shults, Ventura cradled S.D. Jones, Richter pinned Judy Martin after a largely boring 15:07, Andre-Mulligan DDQ Studd-Patera, Snuka pinned Orton in a slow but okay 16:02, Bret Hart beat Fuji-DQ for throwing salt in a waste of both time and Hart, and Hogan-Sheik.

It was a typical 9:00 Hulk match with a leg drop finish. Hulk bled immediately and it was an okay match. The crowd dug it and were sent home happy.

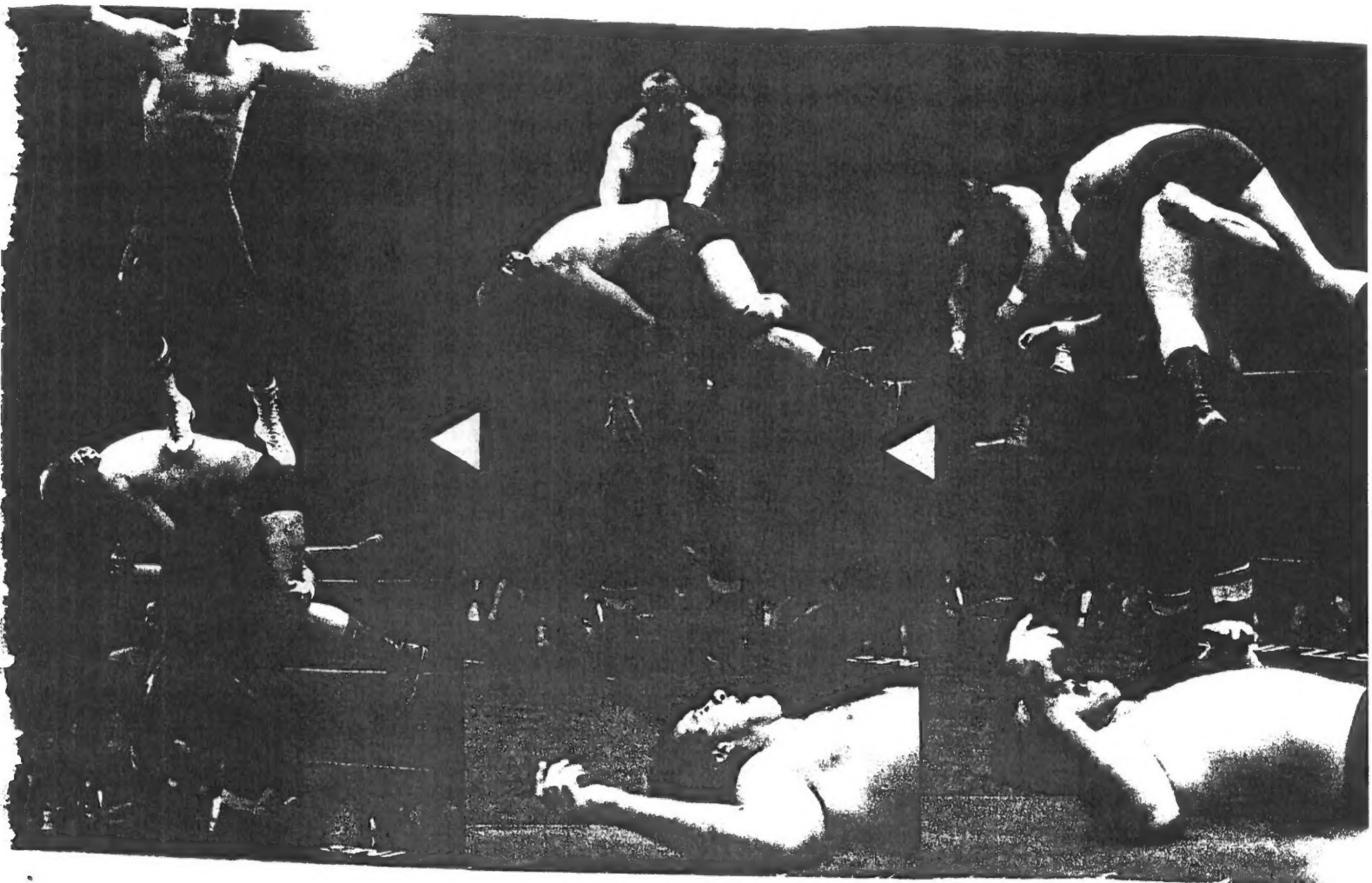
Ventura's reception was of course tremendous. He issued the standard Chump Hogan challenge.

This must encourage the Whiffheads. They're building up good feuds for '85 like Piper-Albano. Things look good except for a lack of challengers for the Hulk. It's not a problem here because Hogan vs. Ventura will do better in the Twin Cities than anywhere else in the world.

The next show is Tuesday 1/29. Announced so far is Welles vs. Muraco, Sammartino vs. Goulet, Atlas vs. Rose, Santana vs. Valentine a tornado tag with Patera-Studd vs. Andre-Mulligan, and no Hulk. We'll assume he'll be here against Ventura.

I forgot to give you the AWA prelim results from Christmas. When you read them, you'll know why. Robinson pinned Steve O, Baron pinned Regal, Brunzell 20:00 draw Saito, Hennig pinned Bockwinkel in 8-9 min, then Bock beat up Curt afterwards. It was so bad that me and Mr. Mike II stood in the corridors most of the show to watch prelim stiff Jimmy Doo try to pick up local wrestling groupies, with no success as far as we could tell.

Next AWA is 1/13. Card is pretty well set. Topper is Blackwell vs Brody with stipulations to be announced. It's the only possibility for a decent match. Get this one, a six man tag with Roadies and Ellering vs. Fabs & Crusher. It's worse than death. The only saving grace is Crusher won't be in more than 30 seconds. The High Flyers reunite against Sheik & Superstar. I don't expect much unless the word from the gutter is correct, Brunzell has demanded to be turned heel or he'll leave. If this match begins the turn it could be good. Then we've got a real groaner, The Axe Attack, Curt & Larry against Bockwinkel & Saito. First, the idea of Larry Hennig and Crusher on the same card keeps me home for the evening. Second, Saito won't be there, he's in Japan that night and with our luck Luke Graham will be the replacement. Steve Regal vs. Buddy Lane (Lane upset Regal on TV) and Robinson vs. Von Raschke added. Maybe I'll listen to it on the radio.



1984 WRESTLING RATINGS

These ratings are based on total points from the 98 ballots cast. With each name and his placing is the total points, plus the placing of the wrestler (if he finished in the top 75) from the 1982 and 83 surveys.

	PTS	83	82		PTS	83	82
1. Ric Flair.....	4766	1	1	66. Lanny Poffo.....	447	--	--
2. Dynamite Kid.....	4740	5	47	67. Genichiro Tenryu....	435	--	--
3. Bruiser Brody.....	4577	2	6	68. Yoshiaki Fujiwara....	429	--	--
4. Super Tiger.....	4264	19	22	69. Buddy Rose.....	428	43	57
5. Davey Boy Smith....	4243	--	--	70. Kazuo Yamazaki.....	423	--	--
6. Riki Choshu.....	4017	13	--	Jim Duggan.....	423	49	--
7. Butch Reed.....	3820	14	27	72. Dory Funk.....	422	29	13
8. Tatsumi Fujinami...	3777	16	35	73. Jay Youngblood.....	410	--	--
9. Stan Hansen.....	3755	7	10	74. Nick Bockwinkel.....	407	26	8
10. Ricky Steamboat....	3650	21	23	75. Isamu Teranishi.....	404	68	--
11. Terry Gordy.....	3605	9	--	76. La Fiera.....	379	--	--
12. The Cobra.....	3522	--	--	77. Tito Santana.....	310	44	56
13. Paul Orndorff.....	3403	11	11	78. Pirata Morgan.....	301	--	--
14. Adrian Adonis.....	3335	3	31	79. Buddy Landell.....	278	--	--
15. Masa Saito.....	3174	24	--	80. Pete Roberts.....	275	--	--
16. Bob Orton.....	3128	12	29	81. Jesse Barr.....	241	--	--
17. Dick Slater.....	2817	25	28	82. Billy Jack.....	220	--	--
18. Randy Savage.....	2578	55	74	83. Rip Oliver.....	219	--	--
19. Kerry Von Erich....	2307	38	44	84. Eric Embry.....	215	--	--
20. Ted DiBiase.....	2271	8	3	85. Jerry Stubbs.....	193	46	--
21. Nobuhiko Takada....	2226	--	--	86. Ricky Morton.....	186	--	--
22. Chavo Guerrero.....	2205	17	67	87. Matt Borne.....	176	--	--
23. Don Kernodle.....	2074	--	--	88. Steve Wright.....	171	--	--
24. Akira Maeda.....	2048	--	--	89. Tonga Kid.....	170	--	--
25. Barry Windham.....	1967	36	--	90. Jay Youngblood.....	161	--	--
26. Animal Hamaguchi...	1815	46	--	91. Hector Guerrero.....	157	--	--
27. Harley Race.....	1778	15	4	92. Michael Hayes.....	150	--	--
28. Kevin Von Erich....	1761	32	55	93. Hiro Saito.....	141	--	--
29. Tiger Mask.....	1757	--	--	94. Pero Aguayo.....	137	--	--
30. Yoshiaki Yatsu.....	1568	57	--	95. Leo Burke.....	134	--	--
31. Sgt. Slaughter.....	1560	4	18	96. Arn Anderson.....	133	--	--
32. Kuniaki Kobayashi..	1479	--	--	97. Dusty Rhodes.....	106	64	15
33. Masked Superstar...	1441	10	12	98. Gino Hernandez.....	98	--	66
34. Roddy Piper.....	1425	18	9	Wahoo McDaniel.....	98	--	41
35. Rick Martel.....	1310	66	43	Jack Brisco.....	98	41	16
36. Hercules Hernandez..	1309	--	--				
37. Brian Blair.....	1303	--	--				
38. Jumbo Tsuruta.....	1243	28	21				
39. Kengo Kimura.....	1132	--	--				
40. Badnews Allen.....	1115	--	--				
41. Hulk Hogan.....	1067	6	7				
42. Black Tiger.....	1039	51	--				
43. Scott McGhee.....	1030	52	--				
44. El Canek.....	993	45	--				
45. Magnum T.A.....	971	--	--				
46. Greg Valentine.....	949	22	37				
47. Buzz Sawyer.....	873	23	26				
48. Bret Hart.....	856	--	--				
49. Strong Machine #2...	847	--	--				
50. Jerry Blackwell....	827	40	49				
51. Dick Murdoch.....	735	73	33				
52. Terry Funk.....	720	50	20				
53. Mike Rotundo.....	711	63	--				
54. Iron Sheik.....	663	64	54				
55. Killer Khan.....	651	38	36				
56. Bobby Eaton.....	631	73	--				
57. Jerry Lawler.....	625	33	30				
58. Chris Adams.....	596	53	--				
59. Keith Hayward.....	584	--	--				
60. El Gran Hamada.....	575	66	--				
61. Tully Blanchard....	567	70	--				
62. Ron Starr.....	515	--	--				
63. Brad Armstrong.....	476	--	--				
64. Dos Caras.....	476	37	64				
65. Terry Taylor.....	468	--	--				

Twelve years ago, when I was a sportswriter in Montreal, I was privileged to cover the wedding of pro wrestler "Mad Dog" Vachon. Earlier this week, on the U.S.A. Cable's increasingly popular wrestling talk show "T.N.T.," Vachon's brother, Paul "The Butcher" was supposedly married — in the ring, what else?

"T.N.T.," which has gained such aficionados as NBC's David Letterman, is turning into one of those pervasively compelling viewing habits of mine, like watching preacher Dr. Gene Scott. "Tuesday Night Titties" is quickly becoming a combination freak show and slob comedy. And in all seriousness, I can say that on most nights "T.N.T." is much funnier than most scripted network comedies.

After the ring bearer was tripped by some nasties in the audience and the ceremony (performed by "Rev. Mayor Lincoln") was heckled by fans, a monosyllabic named The Animal gave the bride away, vows were exchanged, and then there was an argument over the bride's virginity.

I'll be just about anything to avoid the third (or is it fourth?) reincarnation of "Mad Dog Vachon" at that time.

C H A M P I O N S O F 1 9 8 4

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

World's hwt: 1. Ric Flair; 2. Harley Race; 3. Flair; 4. Kerry Von Erich; 5. Flair

United States: 1. Dick Slater; 2. Ricky Steamboat; 3. Wahoo McDaniel

Mid Atlantic: 1. Dick Slater; 2. Ivan Koloff; 3. Angelo Mosca Jr.; 4. Koloff; 5. Mosca Jr.; 6. Dory Funk; 7. Mosca Jr.; 8. Ron Bass

Mid Atlantic TV: 1. Charlie Brown; 2. Mark Youngblood; 3. Tully Blanchard

NWA tag: 1. Bob Orton & Don Kernodle; 2. Wahoo McDaniel & Mark Youngblood; 3. Jack & Jerry Brisco; 4. Mark & Jay Youngblood; 5. Ivan Koloff & Kernodle; 6. Dusty Rhodes & Manny Fernandez

National: 1. Ted DiBiase; 2. Brad Armstrong; 3. The Spoiler; 4. Armstrong; 5. Spoiler; 6. DiBiase; 7. Ron Garvin

National TV: 1. Jake Roberts; 2. Ron Garvin; 3. Bob Roop

National tag: 1. Buzz & Brett Sawyer; 2. Road Warriors; 3. Ron Garvin & Jerry Oates; 4. Ted Oates & Rip Rogers; 5. Brad Armstrong & Tim Horner; 6. Bill & Scott Irwin

Southern: 1. Ron Bass; 2. Mike Rotundo; 3. Angelo Mosca Sr.; 4. Jim Neidhart; 5. Pez Whatley; 6. Kevin Sullivan; 7. Whatley

Florida: 1. Mike Rotundo; 2. Kendo Nagasaki; 3. Billy Jack; 4. Billy Graham; 5. Scott McGhee; 6. Jesse Barr

U.S. tag: 1. Ron Bass & Black Bart; 2. Mike Davis & Mike Rotundo; 3. Bass & Bart; 4. Rotundo & Barry Windham; 5. Bass & Bart; 6. Rotundo & Windham; 7. Chavo & Hector Guerrero; 8. Jim Neidhart & Krusher Khrushchev

Southeastern: 1. Jerry Stubbs; 2. Wayne Ferris; 3. Jimmy Golden; 4. Vic Rain; 5. Austin Idol; 6. Golden

Alabama: 1. Jerry Stubbs; 2. Charlie Cook; 3. Vic Rain; 4. Rick McGraw; 5. Boris Zurcohv; 6. Porkchop Cash

U.S. jr: 1. Ken Lucas; 2. Rip Rogers; 3. Larry Hamilton; 4. Rogers; 5. Johnny Rich; 6. Tommy Gilbert; 7. Rat Patrol; 8. Gilbert; 9. Rat Patrol; 10. Billy Ash

Southeastern tag: 1. Ron Starr & Wayne Ferris; 2. Arn Anderson & Jerry Stubbs; 3. Jimmy Golden & Robert Fuller; 4. Anderson & Stubbs; 5. Rat Patrol; 6. Anderson & Stubbs; 7. Rat Patrol; 8. Mr. Wrestling I & II; 9. Rat Patrol; 10. Pat & Randy Rose

Missouri: 1. David Von Erich; 2. Harley Race; 3. Jerry Blackwell

Central States: 1. Buzz Tyler; 2. Tully Blanchard; 3. Tyler; 4. Luke Graham; 5. Ted Oates; 6. Tyler; 7. Hacksaw Higgins; 8. Harley Race

Central States tag: 1. The Grapplers; 2. Ted & Jerry Oates; 3. Grapplers; 4. Marty Janetty & Tommy Rogers; 5. Grapplers; 6. Janetty & Rogers; 7. Mr. Pogo & Gypsy Joe; 10. Janetty &

Bob Brown

World 6 man: 1. Kevin & Kerry & David Von Erich; 2. Michael Hayes & Terry Gordy & Buddy Roberts; 3. Kevin & Kerry & Mike Von Erich; 4. Gino Hernandez & Jake Roberts & Chris Adams; 5. Von Erichs

American: 1. Chris Adams; 2. Jimmy Garvin; 3. Gino Hernandez; 4. Mike Von Erich; 5. Hernandez; 6. Kerry Von Erich

Texas: 1. David Von Erich; 2. Gino Hernandez

International: 1. Jumbo Tsuruta

Pacific Federation: 1. Stan Hansen; 2. Giant Baba

United National: 1. Ted DiBiase; 2. Michael Hayes; 3. David Von Erich; 4. Genichiro Tenryu

International jr: 1. Chavo Guerrero; 2. Mighty Inoue

International tag: 1. Giant Baba & Jumbo Tsuruta; 2. Tsuruta & Genichiro Tenryu

PWF tag: 1. Bruiser Brody & Stan Hansen

Northwest: 1. Rip Oliver; 2. Buddy Rose; 3. Oliver; 4. Billy Jack; 5. Oliver; 6. Bobby Jagers

Northwest tag: 1. Curt Hennig & Pat McGee; 2. Rip Oliver & The Assassin; 3. Tom Prichard & Brett Sawyer; 4. Mr. Ebony & Mike Miller; 5. Prichard & Sawyer; 6. Prichard & Jerry Gray; 7. Ebony & Miller

AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

AWA: 1. Nick Bockwinkel; 2. Jumbo Tsuruta; 3. Rick Martel

AWA tag: 1. Ken Patera & Jerry Blackwell; 2. The Crusher & Baron Von Raschke; 3. Road Warriors

MID SOUTH

North American: 1. Junkyard Dog; 2. Mr. Wrestling II; 3. Magnum T.A.; 4. Ernie Ladd; 5. Brad Armstrong

Mid South TV: 1. Krusher Khrushchev; 2. Terry Taylor; 3. Adrian Street; 4. Bill Dundee

Mid South tag: 1. Mr. Wrestling II & Magnum T.A.; 2. Dennis Condrey & Bobby Eaton; 3. Ricky Morton & Robert Gibson; 4. Condrey & Eaton; 5. Morton & Gibson; 6. Ted DiBiase & Hercules Hernandez; 7. Morton & Gibson

SOUTHWEST

Southwest: 1. Scott Casey; 2. Killer Brooks; 3. Bobby Jagers; 4. Brooks; 5. Kevin Sullivan

Southwest tag: 1. Eric Embry & Ken Timbs; 2. Al Perez & Manny Fernandez; 3. Embry & Timbs; 4. Embry & Dan Greer; 5. Brett Sawyer & Chicky Starr; 6. Embry & Greer; 7. Jerry Olski & Rick Casey

JARRETT PROMOTIONS

International: 1. Austin Idol; 2. Randy Savage; 3. Idol; 4. Masao Ito; 5. Tommy Rich; 6. Eddie Gilbert; 7. Dutch Mantell; 8. Gilbert; 9. Terry Taylor
Southern: 1. Jerry Lawler; 2. Humungous; 3. Lawler; 4. Ric Rude; 5. Tommy Rich; 6. King Kong Bundy; 7. Lawler
Mid American: 1. Randy Savage; 2. Jerry Lawler; 3. Jacques Rougeau; 4. Kostia Korchenko; 5. Mike Sharpe
Southern tag: 1. Stan Lane & Steve Keirn; 2. Elijah Akeem & Kareem Muhammad; 3. Koko Ware & Norvell Austin; 4. Akeem & Muhammad; 5. Jerry Lawler & Jos LeDuc; 6. Tommy Rich & Eddie Gilbert; 7. Phil Hickerson & The Spoiler; 8. Ricky Morton & Robert Gibson; 9. The Nightmares (Ken Wayne & Danny Davis); 10. Dutch Mantell & Rich; 11. King Kong Bundy & Ric Rude; 12. Lane & Keirn; 13. Interns (Don Bass & Roger Smith)

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

WWF: 1. Iron Sheik; 2. Hulk Hogan
Intercontinental: 1. Don Muraco; 2. Tito Santana; 3. Greg Valentine
WWF tag: 1. Tony Atlas & Rocky Johnson; 2. Dick Murdoch & Adrian Adonis

NEW JAPAN

INJP: 1. Hulk Hogan; 2. Antonio Inoki
International: 1. Tatsumi Fujinami
NWA jr: 1. The Cobra
WWF jr: 1. Dynamite Kid; 2. The Cobra

L A R G E S T C R O W D S

45,000	8/15	Islamabad, Pakistan	Antonio Inoki vs. Allan Coage
42,000*	11/22	Greensboro, North Carolina	Ric Flair vs. Dusty Rhodes
40,000	8/6	Peshwal, Pakistan	Antonio Inoki vs. Superstar
36,000*	5/6	Dallas, Texas	Ric Flair vs. Kerry Von Erich
35,000	8/8	Lahore, Pakistan	Inoki-Fujinami vs. Coage-Billy Crusher (Superstar)
35,000	8/10	Karachi, Pakistan	Antonio Inoki vs. Superstar
30,000	8/12	Kuwaita, Pakistan	Tatsumi Fujinami-Riki Choshu vs Billy Crusher-El Canek
29,000	9/15	San Juan, Puerto Rico	Bruiser Brody-Stan Hansen vs Carlos Colon-Abdullah Butcher
26,092*	1/23	Madison Square Garden	Hulk Hogan vs Iron Sheik
26,092*	2/20	Madison Square Garden	Hulk Hogan vs Paul Orndorff
26,092*	3/25	Madison Square Garden	Bob Backlund vs Greg Valentine
26,092*	6/16	Madison Square Garden	Sgt. Slaughter vs Iron Sheik
26,092*	12/28	Madison Square Garden	Roddy Piper-Bob Orton vs Jimmy Snuka-Tonga Kid
25,000*	5/21	Madison Square Garden	Sgt. Slaughter vs Iron Sheik
23,000	4/7	Superdome	Bill Watts-Junkyard Dog vs Dennis Condrey-Bobby Eaton
22,092	4/23	Madison Square Garden	Sgt. Slaughter vs Iron Sheik
22,092	11/26	Madison Square Garden	Tonga Kid vs Roddy Piper
21,777	3/11	Meadowlands	Battle Royal
20,800	6/16	Superdome	Hulk Hogan vs David Shultz
20,000	10/22	Madison Square Garden	Junkyard Dog vs Butch Reed
19,699	11/10	Philadelphia	Hulk Hogan vs John Studd
19,000	3/25	St. Paul Civic Center	Sgt. Slaughter-Junkyard Dog vs Iron Sheik-Niccoli Volkoff
18,977	7/15	Meadowlands	Gagne-Crusher vs Kaissey-Blackwell
18,300	3/4	Rosemont Horizon	Andre-Hulk vs Murdoch-Adonis-Stu
18,000	3/4	Capital Centre	Jumbo Tsuruta vs Blackjack Lanza
18,000	4/1	Rosemont Horizon	Hulk Hogan vs Iron Sheik
			Blackjacks-Bruiser vs Patera-Blackwell-Kaissey

*includes closed circuit attendance



F R O M M R . M I K E

Well, well, well. This marks one year of Mr. Mike's mellifluous musings and quite a year it's been. One real mother of a year. Our wrestling world has withstood unparralleled upheavals and the immediate prognosis is for more.

I see 1983 as some sort of high point in American Pro wrestling history. Several promotions, simultaneously and independent of each other achieving unprecedented promoting success. Some didn't fare so well. A few nearly self destructed. 1984 saw most of this success lost, basically due to the "promotional war."

Ah the war. The only surprising thing is an attempt to dominate wrestling in the United States hadn't occurred previously. Chalk one up for cable television and the great urban inroads it finally made. In our greed-based society, can you blame anyone for trying? I don't. I'm just glad the involved promoters aren't much smarter than the fans they serve with obvious contempt. The coming year will be a lot different. Think of how different things are to just one year ago?

One year ago. Promotional "status quo," with the first glimmers of WWF-NWA-AWA hegemony dissolving apparent only to the closest observers. The AWA was finishing its most successful year ever, primarily due to Hulk Hogan. They were to wind it up with a Christmas sellout, featuring Hulk's return to the Twin Cities after a two month absence. The had opened up the Salt Lake City, San Francisco and Las Vegas markets up to compliment there long success in Denver. A move in Phoenix, long a "Rasslin Waste Land" loomed.

The Crockett Mid Atlantic promotion, culminating in the Starcade '83 record setter, was finishing one of its best years. Fritz Von Erich's Dallas promotion, with a full year of Freebirds vs Von Erichs, also broke attendance records. Other NWA spots were holding steady at least.

The Atlanta promotion, hitting new lows monthly at the hands of Ole Anderson, achieved some success from time-to-time. They still almost filled the Omni for their Thanksgiving biggie.

Things were a bit more troubling in the WWF. Their champ, Bob Backlund, was finishing his sixth and most boring year. His most recent formula rivals, Iron Sheik and Masked Superstar, weren't drawing. His series with Sgt. Slaughter, a huge success, was over. Jimmy Snuka was being played down because of personal problems. Intercontinental champ Don Muraco was more interested in other things besides brawling. They weren't losing money but any means. They weren't on a roll either.

Then came the December "Revolution." Vince Jr., given the green light (spurred on I'm told by Ernie Roth's death) began. The moves up to this point, the West Coast expansion and the raiding of Georgia's talent (Paul Orndorff, Superstar, Sheik, Brian Blair and Tito Santana) didn't seem overly alarming. The expansion into the cable market in the form of "All American Wrestling" lulled many of us with their highlighting stars from other circuits. Cooperation, we thought, as usual.

Boom Boom Boom. The WWF hired away Hulk Hogan, "Mean Gene" Okerlund and Dave Shults from the AWA, causing a whole series of Hogan no-shows in December. From the Mid Atlantic came Roddy Piper with Greg Valentine and Bob Orton soon following. Both moves were painful, though not devastating, as was feared at the time.

Vinnie's syndicated TV empire began with either/and/or Superstar's. All Star and Championship Wrestling showing up in something like 90 markets. This allowed by spring time live shows in many "rival" markets, often with poor results.

More talent raids followed. It became obvious the impetus was not what would help the WWF, but what would hurt other promotions. Jesse Ventura, Mad Dog Vachon, Al DeRusha, Rodger Kent and Bobby Heenan came from the AWA. Junkyard Dog was brought in from Mid South. The Freebirds came in from Dallas. Angelo Mosca, Blackjack Mulligan, Barry Windham, Kimala and Mike Rotundo came from the Carolinas.

The ultimate coup was the purchase of a controlling interest in arch-rival Georgia Championship Wrestling, Inc. Vinnie also got Toronto when promoter Jack Tunney (now elevated to "President" of the World Wrestling Federation) was faced with really no other choice. The Calgary Stu Hart promotion was then bought out by deep pockets McMahon.

This should have put the WWF at the pinnacle, but of course that hasn't happened. The live shows failed miserably in the Memphis circuit and did almost as bad in Mid Atlantic. Tepid success was met at first in Miami but crowds soon dwindled into the hundreds. Some AWA cities, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago and most of all Oakland have seen a measure of success.

They will certainly wind up destroyed in the Mid South (Watts happenin'?) and Dallas. Nearly everywhere else outside the Northeast saw some success and then progressively worse attended shows. A "new era" indeed. The Peter Principle is now the Vinnie Principle. Have all the right strategies. Use all the wrong tactics. Get you ass handed to you. Vince, now you can write a book.

Most of the circuits hit hard by Vince one year ago, after some shakiness, are enjoying current success. For the AWA, Minneapolis-St. Paul "hometown" seems to be rallying. Chicago had stayed solid. Winnipeg remains bright as well. They've had some disasters like San Francisco, Indianapolis and Phoenix. Salt Lake City has been down since a multi-no-show fiasco.

The Mid Atlantic, considering the talent they lost (Piper, Orton, Valentine, Windham) and they replacements (Dusty, Fernandez) it's a miracle Starcade '84 went as well as it did. They seem to have some positive momentum.

What about '85?

All eyes will remain on the WWF as they enter year two of the new era. Are they hurting for money yet? It's difficult to imagine how they can't be with overall attendance poorer than any scenario. They keep chugging along with talent signings, although they've slowed up quite a bit. Billy Jack left after almost an entire week. Brian Blair took off after a year in prelims. Dynamite Kid and Davey Boy Smith found out quickly there wasn't one decent opponent to work with. Kimala is gone. Who cares, but it's fun to see now-gone guys promoted like heck in the WWF calendar and in magazine ads. Their biggest loss is the most recent since Sgt. Slaughter put in for a transfer.

As for the new faces. The biggest joke is Ed Leslie/Boulder/Hogan re-emerging as Brutus Beefcake, or more perceptively Brutus Buttplug. The Tonga Kid was been a credible performer, doing as good a job as can be expected filling the Jimmy Snuka void. Jimmy's back now. Brooklyn girls beware. The point is, however, they're bringing in lower priced talent.

We're finally seeing how they'll use the "Hillbilly" in the audience, one-time Harley Davidson (Jim Morris). Also, the Superstars syndie from St. Louis was scrapped with no replacement evident, and none needed. The front office "talent" had better keep their coats on, especially former AWA ones. Unemploymentmania runs wild.

To their credit, the Poughkeepsie, New York tapings with Vince and Bruno has a genuine aura of excitement.

I've avoided discussing in-ring performances by-and-large with good reason. The "real" champ, Hulk Hogan, has been a major disappointment. It's not all his fault. Consider his schedule. It would make Ric Flair wince.

Still, the Hulk's lack of real wrestling ability and unimaginative angles, a result of his huge and giant-like ego, are wearing thin. Where will it go in '85? Retread challengers like Orton, Valentine, Orndorff, Ventura and Sheik? Beefcake? They're in trouble. Too bad Kimala's gone.

One good foe would be Butch Reed. Hopefully Bill Watts will keep him pacified. Incredibly enough, reliable word has it the WWF never even approached the guy. Another good foe would be Randy Savage but he's already said, "No thanks." I don't want to forget Ken Patera as a potential challenger even if I already have forgotten him as a talented wrestler.

As for the AWA and NWA--as long as the AWA has Brody it will keep my interest and I suspect, the crowds as well. Less so the Roadies, although they're vitally important to the public in general. The AWA is suffering with a lackluster champion in Rick Martel. Hopefully that will change.

The NWA should keep rolling along even though most areas are in need of rehabilitation. Flair remains a near-perfect champ, but even he can't weather endless "temporary" title changes ala Kerry Von Erich.

It's hardly a secret that Ric and Jerry Lawler will dance-that-dance sometime in '85. I'd rather not think about it.



After just one event, the word "Starcade" became synonymous with "the biggest and best card of the year" among pro wrestling fans. The inaugural Starcade '83 event, taking place on Thanksgiving was billed as the "greatest wrestling card of all-time." Billing like that isn't rare in this business, but living up to that billing is.

Starcade '83 saw the advent of a new and risky concept, closed circuiting a card at high prices (\$12.50 to \$15 per head) over a geographical area consisting of several states and into Puerto Rico. But the guns were there to try such a thing, the climactic World title struggle between champion Harley Race and challenger Ric Flair inside a cage; The first ever in the Carolinas dog collar match sending Greg Valentine against Roddy Piper; A World tag team title struggle sending two of the best teams around, perhaps the two best technical teams-- Jack and Jerry Brisco defending against Jay Youngblood and Ricky Steamboat; Plus a gimmick match sending Charlie Brown (Jimmy Valiant under the mask) putting his mask, and theoretically his career on the line against Kabuki's Mid Atlantic TV title in a no time limit match.

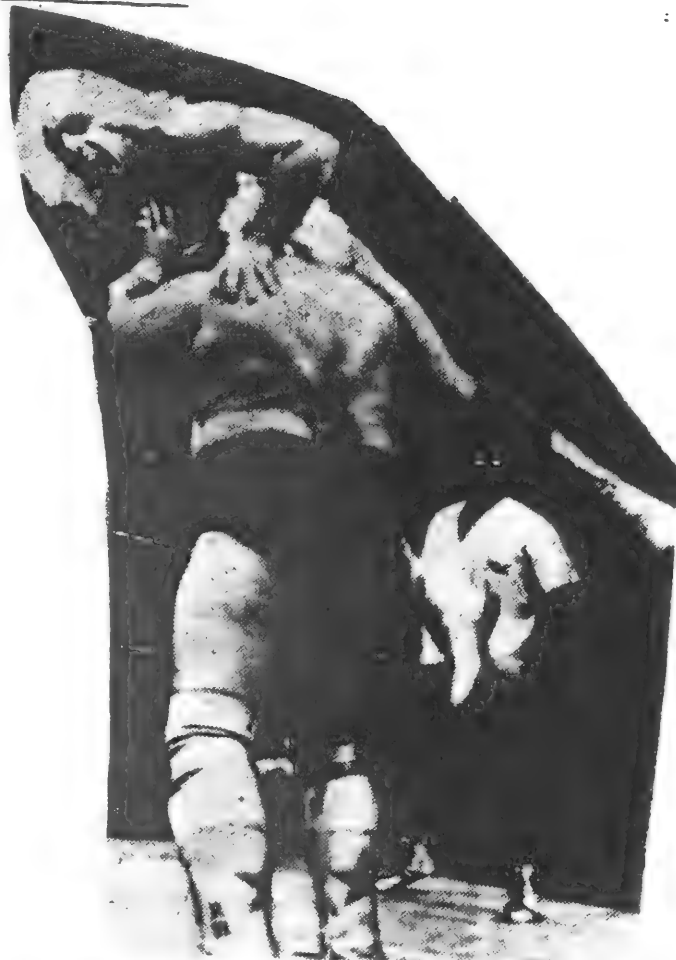
Between the sellout in Greensboro and closed circuit sites, 54,755 fans turned out--the largest crowd and the largest gate in pro wrestling history in North America. The highlight match sending Flair home as champion over Race placed second in the Match of the Year category. The Piper-Valentine match also received strong support, as the tag title change was every bit as favorably received. We're all too young to know if it was the greatest card of all-time, but it definitely was the best card in recent years.

The follow-up wasn't expected to approach that mark. The match-ups weren't nearly as good. Jim Crockett's stable of wrestlers was down from nine top-notchers and one World champ to just three top-notchers (Steamboat, Dick Slater and Tully Blanchard) and the champ.

And as expected, the card wasn't nearly on the level of its predecessor. However I would call it a very good show. All the wrestlers performed up to their potential. There were just a few too many limited potential boys on the show.

Not only did the show sellout Greensboro (just under 16,000), but closed circuit sites ranged from 8,000 (Richmond); 4,500 (Charlotte); 1,500 full house (Spartanburg); 4,000 (Winston-Salem) down to just a few hundred (Orlando, Florida). The total attendance was roughly 42,000, making it the No. 2 crowd and gate in North American pro wrestling history.

On with the show:



1. Dennis Brown won what was billed as the N.W.A. World jr. heavyweight crown pinning Mike Davis in 7:00. Davis caught Brown with a back suplex, but Brown managed to bridge while Davis didn't. Good paced action and Brown even showed some nice moves, but his lack of experience showed. **½
2. Brian Adidas pinned Masao Ito in 5:00 with an airplane spin. Bout was uneventful. *
3. Jesse Barr retained the Florida title pinning Mike Graham in 12:00 using ropes as leverage. The first five minutes were bad, but the pace picked up and it turned into a very good match with many near falls. Barr's performance in some ways was the biggest surprise of the card, although many had previously noted his improvement. Graham was better than usual, but not as good as he was a few years back. Can't rate it higher because of the dull beginning. **½
4. The Assassin & Buzz Tyler won an elimination tag match from the Zambue Elephants in 4:00. Tyler's attempt to dance to "Footloose" was as unintentionally ludicrous as Vince McMahon tries to be. Ending was kind of cheap as Tyler and Elijah Akeem fought outside the ring and were both counted out at the same moment Assassin and Kareem Muhammad collided. Tyler pushed Assassin, standing by the ropes, onto Kareem's obese frame. This was all action, albeit poor action. *
5. Manny Fernandez pinned Black Bart to win a newly concocted Brass Knux title in 8:00. J.J. Dillon threw Bart a rope, and as he tried to unravel it, Manny caught him from behind with a

rolling reverse, poorly executed I should add. Fernandez bled 3:00 into the bout and Bart bled at 5:00, both for no apparent reason other than their inability to get "heat" any other way. **

6. Paul Jones pinned Jimmy Valiant in 5:00 in a tuxedo street fight, which was also a loser leaves town match. Valiant started by stripping Jones down to his briefs. Jones bled at 4:00 which didn't look good considering Valiant's punches are the second worst (nothing tops Mulligan) in the biz'. The ref was KOed, J.J. Dillon clobbered Valiant with an object and Jones pinned him. Bring Back Charlie Brown. I hate to admit it, but I enjoyed this match a little. **

7. Ron Bass beat Dick Slater via DQ in 9:00 when Dick shoved down the referee. Slater spent too much time at the beginning chasing J.J. Dillon and they didn't lock up and use holds till the 3:00 mark. Slater was excellent for the rest of the bout and Bass was bearable.***

8. Ivan & Nikita Koloff downed Keith Larson & Ole Anderson in 15:00 when Ivan pinned Larson after hitting him with a chain as the ref was breaking up Ole's brawl with Nikita. The angle with Larson going for revenge for his brother (Don Kernodle) worked for me, however Keith doesn't look convincing on top. Ole and Nikita were useless, as they always are but Ivan made this bout very good. After the bout Kernodle, who was at ringside, broke his crutches over Ivan's back which was the best part of the event. ***

9. Tully Blanchard retained the Mid Atlantic TV title pinning Ricky Steamboat in 14:00 when Rick went for a roll-up, Tully went into his trunks, nailed Rick with an object and got the pin. This was one of the best matches I've seen all year on this side of the Pacific. Steamboat was by far the best performer on the card and Tully stayed with him all the way. The pace was extremely hot and every move looked convincing. To me, this bout saved the card because a show like this needs at least one outstanding match. **** $\frac{1}{2}$

10. Wahoo McDaniel retained the U.S. title pinning Billy Graham with a chop off the ropes in 4:00. The only thing I can say positive about the bout is that they worked their 4:00. $\frac{1}{2}$ *

11. Ric Flair retained the World's title downing Dusty Rhodes when ref Joe Frazier stopped the match because of Rhodes' cut above the eye in 12:00. Rhodes generally bleeds worse than this when he shaves, but the cut was near the eye giving a small bit of credibility to the decision. Rhodes either can't or won't move, I'm not sure which. Flair put on his normal great performance, but in with a bum like Dusty, even "The One and Only" can only do so much. ***



C O R R E S P O N D E N T S C O R N E R

STARCADE DISAPPOINTING

I missed last years' Starcade show and have never forgiven myself. This year I was going to see it no matter what.

I was looking forward to a good show. I knew the talent would be a little thin, but talent doesn't always make a good show. However, I was disappointed. Although it wasn't a horrible card, for Starcade, it was a big letdown. After thinking it over, maybe it wasn't such a bad job by Jim Crockett after all, however.

All in all the card was acceptable except the last two matches (Wahoo-Graham and Flair-Rhodes). Wahoo's match was so short it was a crime, and for the big match to end without a solid winner was a letdown.

Last years' Starcade ended many feuds and several titles changed hands. The result was for the next three months crowds were down and nothing much happened on the TV shows. Very little was settled this year, so perhaps we have the making for some good times in the future. Whatever the reason, Wahoo and Graham were still inexcusable.

Mike Sapp
Falls Church, Virginia

GETTING BURNED OUT

I certainly can't blame you in the least for your current state of pro wrestling "burn out." I whole heartedly agree with you and feel the same way about the state of affairs of my one-time favorite "sport."

I personally feel Vince Jr. will be single-handedly responsible for the inevitable demise of this once great pasttime. I had hoped things would get better this year in the W.W.F., but after several more months of attending live shows my hope turned into total despair.

I always thought the main point of a TV taping is to whet the viewers' appetite and thus hopefully secure large crowds at the arena shows.

Yet, when one attends a WWF arena card (be it MSG, Nassau Coliseum, Meadowlands, Spectrum or wherever) we are invariably confronted with a seemingly endless array of nothing happening rest-hold TV matches. I'm convinced that any 10-year-old could do a better job of promoting and matchmaking than he does.

Howard Lapes
Yonkers, New York

MORE FOUL-UPS

There have been more no-shows in Detroit on the last few WWF shows. Part of the problem is when advertising a recent show, one interview gave one set of matches and another interview the same day gave a completely different set of matches. The only match the same was the main event.

George Wilkinson
Windsor, Ontario

CAN VOTE ON A FEW THINGS

Although I don't see enough wrestling to vote on most categories in the poll, I can surely vote on these three:

Worst announcer has got to be Jack Reynolds. Some of my favorite Reynoldsisms: The Junkyard Man, Danny Boy Smith, Jimmy "Snooper Fly" Snuka and John Studd, who is 7-feet inches tall. Also Tony Reed and Butch Atlas.

Shock of the year in one word-- Bruno. As I write this I'm watching a videotape of a local news show segment called "Lord of the Rings." Here is a quote from Bruno--"I'm not going to mention any names but I'll tell you the East Coast wrestling in my opinion is a crime and a shame what they give the public. Let's do away with the cape, the Pretty Boy this, the Super this or whatever and let's show wrestling. Not only will they still draw the crowds, but maybe they'll start gaining some respect from the media and the critics of the game."

I remember at one point not too long ago when Bruno had to be physically restrained from kicking the crap out of "guess who" and now he's working side-by-side with him again.

Favorite wrestler--The only guy who keeps me glued to my seat all the time is Ric Flair.

My only comment on Vince McMahon is that I'm certain he's the biggest bastard of them all. I couldn't be convinced otherwise. He reminds me of Caligula, someone who would destroy his own family to get more power.

As for Tony Atlas' return to the WWF--without sounding prejudice, let's say I don't consider Tony to be the most intelligent guy in the world.

John Pantozzi
Brooklyn, New York

MORE ON BRODY

I love watching Bruiser Brody wrestle and I wish the A.W.A. wouldn't tag him with Sheik Kaissey. The funniest feud right now has to be Greg Gagne and Brody with Greg talking about how he wants to get revenge against Brody. I think I'd go to any card with Brody-Greg on it regardless of any other matches. I can't imagine even the stupidest fan buying Greg beating on Brody.

Vic Sherberg
Chicago, Illinois

THE MTV GENERATION

I saw a bit of the tape of Gordon Solie and Lance Russell together and I kind of liked it. I think if anyone can make Gordon look good it's Lance.

I hope Stan Stasiak gets some kind of job behind the mike. Seeing his feud with Rip Oliver made me appreciate him as a commentator.

I'm also glad Dynamite Kid left Ringling Brothers. I would hope they'll create an NWA jr. belt for him. If he came back to the Northwest, I might actually attend live cards again--unless, of course Billy Jack returns.

Lastly, I had the chance to talk with my 13-year-old sister, an "MTV generation" wrestling fan. She went on extolling the virtues of Hulk Hogan and Wendi Richter. I told her she picked two wrestlers with very little ability and she said, "It doesn't matter because wrestling is all hype."

For a person who watches only WWF TV matches and has no knowledge of wrestling beyond that, what she said was completely true.

She doesn't know who Ric Flair is and she thinks Dynamite Kid is "no good, he's too small."

Sean Ryan
Anchorage, Alaska

DIDN'T LIKE WEDDINGS

When I read about the direction pro wrestling is going, I have the seem feeling of futility and fascination I got when I watched the "Butcher Vachon wedding" on TNT. Fortunately I wasn't home at the time but I have it on tape for posterity purposes.

I can't believe any hour or two devoted to pro wrestling in the future will ever be so degrading to the sport or lacking in respect for its fans. No one would ever believe a description of that abomination without visual proof.

This erases all doubt as to who is the biggest "horse's ass" in wrestling. How could Vince regard this as enhancing anyone's view of pro wrestling.

The only thing positive from the show is wasn't it ingenious of him to produce one program at the last minute which unquestionably qualifies him for winning four of your awards--shock of the year, most disgusting promotional tactic, worst TV show and worst announcer.

Ron Dobratz
Roscoe, Illinois

OLE'S CIRCUS GETTING BETTER

The last few weeks of the Georgia NWA Wrestling show with the influence of Memphis boys has made Ole's show quite entertaining.

With Jimmy Hart around, it's hard even for a shmo like Ole to screw up.

I think it's quite apparent that the Eddie Einhorn syndicate group

is a fiasco and of no consequence in the Northeast. While many of the matches show good workrate, a steady diet of no-angles and of squash bouts will never hurt Bozo in the slightest in the Northeast. To show how out of touch they are with the fans here, the continue to parade around "Triple B" (Boring Bob Backlund). If only they had developed one feud, or two, or displayed some matches with names vs. names. I guess with Virgil's hand in things, anything more than an ego trip would be too much to expect.

However, Bozo's decline is evident. After watching an inane and meaningless wedding segment on TNT, I get the impression Vinnie is finished and is just hoping to be saved by a network contract thus he's going all-out for attention. Rumor has it Vince's "War chest" is rapidly depleting anyway.

His TV shows have become worse than ever. The live shows I've seen are below that. If Vince was smart, he'd look for buyers for his empire. The only thing he's done is create an illusion of a booming wrestling business.

I would like to salute the following wrestlers--Buzz Sawyer, Don Kernodle, Ivan Koloff, Kimala, Dynamite Kid, Davey Boy Smith, The Superstar, Brian Blair and Sgt. Slaughter.

Rich Dorf
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

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ONE OF THE BAD YEARS

Like any other business, pro wrestling has good years and bad ones, and some fair to middlin'. Despite a few bright spots, this has to go down as one of the bad ones.

Vince McMahon's attempt at world domination of wrestling, using mainly past their prime talent, was met with mixed reaction for other promotions.

Mid South, Memphis and World Class kept their quality high. Mid Atlantic and Florida hurt most of the year after McMahon's talent raids. Georgia lost their prime TV slot on WTBS although their quality decline started more than a year before that. The AWA, for much of the year, offered the same garbage they've offered for years.

The worst event of the year was the death of David Von Erich. Death is almost always a sad event for the survivors. What was particularly tragic to the fans is that at a young age, David was already at the top of the business. It's sad to speculate on how things might be different and what he may have contributed.

Promotional tactics reached a new low this year. Promoters continued to use gimmicks which long ago had lost their effectiveness. Most new stunts were poor. There are at least a half dozen stunts which would have been the worst in any other year.

The main bright spot was Ric Flair. Flair continued his dominance of the N.W.A. wrestling a grueling schedule and putting on many fine exhibitions. Hopefully Flair will remain on top, what else can be hoped for for the premier talent in the business.

The May 6 card at Texas Stadium drew the largest crowd ever in the state for wrestling. Also, the Freebirds vs Von Erichs feud was remaining strong for the second year.

But the bad far outweighed the good. If wrestling is to survive and prosper, 1985 will have to be a turning point.

Promoters must learn to work together, share talent, and respect territorial boundaries.

Danny Novak
Wichita Falls, Texas

GLAD KID, SMITH LEFT

I'm happy to see good wrestlers such as Dynamite Kid, Davey Boy Smith and Brian Blair have left the WWF and that Sgt. Slaughter left as well.

I was disappointed to see the AWA is among the promotions you've quit watching. I don't see tapes of other promotions, but I think the AWA compares favorably with the World Class promotion you seem to like.

I think Bruiser Brody, the Road Warriors, The Fabs and the Masked Superstar are at least as good as the Dallas group. The arena shows with Brody, Warriors, Bockwinkel, Saito and Hennig supply good action.

The Dallas matches shown on TV are good, but it seems every main event ends with a manager, tag team partner or those horrible girls interfering to cause a DQ or cheap fall. Many of the main events are very short. I hate waiting for a big match only to see it last 5-6 minutes with everyone interfering.

Vic Sherberg
Bellwood, Illinois



I N S I D E J A P A N W R E S T L I N G

Normally this column in the Wrestling Observer deals with the goings-on behind-the-scenes in Japanese wrestling. This issue we'll instead try to give you a look at the Japanese wrestling itself. I was fortunate to spend some time during my vacation in Japan and saw many shows, met many wrestling fans and reporters, had a tremendous time, and also saw the four best cards that I've probably ever seen, or likely ever will see.

I know that I'm tired of saying it, and many are tired of reading it, but I'd be lying (or avoiding the truth) not to say the three Japanese promotions are the three best I've ever seen. I lived in the Dallas area during their boom period and saw many good shows, but for action and excitement it can't even compare. I attended several Oklahoma City cards for Mid South, the promotion most feel is the best in the states and yes, the shows were great, but the caliber of athletes and their work rate just isn't in the ballpark.

Wrestling is treated virtually like a sport in Japan. The daily sports newspaper covers the previous night's bouts in great detail, always with large photos accompanying the story. With baseball season over, the tag team tournament got about 75 percent of the sports coverage, with just a small smattering of golf and volleyball and some sumo. There are three weekly wrestling magazines, plus two more weekly wrestling newspapers. There are also several large monthly books, with the finest wrestling photography chock full of great action color shots--mostly for about the same price as the U.S. rags. Many bookstores also carry photo albums of the "hot" wrestlers, which when I was there were Riki Choshu, Akira Maeda, Genichiro Tenryu and Satoru Sayama. Biography books (all in Japanese unfortunately) are available for all the big stars--Tsuruta, Fujinami, Choshu, Maeda, Terry Funk, Tenryu and Sayama. There are even wrestler postcards and wrestler comic books. In fact, there are two stores devoted entirely to selling wrestling items in Tokyo and Osaka. Besides the magazines and books, and of course T-Shirts, Choshu calendars, record albums (there are more than 30 LPs on the market which are wrestling related, and they are available not only at the wrestling and sports shops, but in virtually every record store. They range from the blow-by-blow of important matches, like the old Tiger Mask vs. Dynamite Kid bouts; to wrestler theme song albums and as many people know, Hulk Hogan and Terry Funk are among several wrestlers who actually sing on their own LPs. Funk's songs were all arranged by Jimmy Hart by the way), they also sell videotapes of great bouts dating back probably 25 years, to the present.

I was very lucky that during a short stay I was able to see four different troupes of wrestlers and of course Giant Baba's All Japan group had perhaps its best series ever, and certainly its best tag team tournament ever. Antonio Inoki's New Japan group, which was the best in the world until the roof caved in during September, did not have a great series despite it being the tag tourney. Of course the big mystery circuit is the Universal Wrestling Federation and its "shooting" style.

The only way I can describe UWF wrestling is that it's a culture shock. This is the hardest wrestling style I've ever seen. I would guess most readers of this publication, as serious fans, would like UWF shows live better than any other group. Words like "selling" aren't even in these guys vocabulary. The only time someone goes down is when he's knocked down by the force of the blow. Most of the matches consist of "workout style" wrestling, with absolutely no playing to the crowd. When the Japanese stars go against one another, the matches are about as close to pure "shooting" as you'll ever see. Every move is resisted by the opponent. It's like a combination amateur wrestling match with kick karate moves thrown in. The chops, kicks and submission holds are put on with ~~much~~ force. At the same time, to the casual fan in the states, which I would call 99 percent of them, UWF wrestling would go over their head. It would actually appeal more to fans of amateur wrestling than pro, although amateur fans may be turned off because of the finishes.

While I won't run down every card I saw, I'll go through the major ones with comments on many of the wrestlers who most tape collectors haven't seen.

December 5 - Tokyo Korauken Hall (Universal Wrestling Federation)

1. Scott McGhee forced Masami Soranaka (Karl Gotch's son-in-law) to submit to an armlock in 22:22. This bout was 70-80 percent realistic, however it was evident from the start McGhee was far superior. It was too obvious McGhee was carrying the guy and letting him be on top. The bout was interesting to me, and things like rest holds don't exist here. ** $\frac{1}{2}$
2. Mach Hayato forced Scotty Williams to submit to a "sankakujime" (a judo arm bar type move) in 14:28. This was the only match where they used the ropes for any purpose and there was showmanship evident. Williams is a very good wrestler, he's built like Spike Huber (a little short but muscular upper body). It appeared he could be a pretty good performer on a U.S. circuit if given the chance as he's strong, a good athlete, can wrestle well, has very good timing and above all has tremendous desire ("fighting spirit" as they call it in Japan). Hayato did a flying body press from the top turnbuckle onto Williams who was on the arena floor. Hayato hasn't learned "shooting" well yet. Williams was definitely the superior wrestler. ** $\frac{1}{2}$

3. Akira Maeda & Pete Roberts went to a 30:00 draw with Osamu Kido & Keith Hayward. This bout was tremendous. Hayward, who is from England, is one of the best wrestlers in the world right now. As a technician, he's the best I've seen since Karl Gotch, including Steve Wright and all the Japanese. Maeda wrestles with much more confidence now than he did with Inoki's group, but as good as he was, he was only third best in the ring. The crowd was more up when Kido faced Maeda, but actually Roberts vs Hayward provided the best wrestling. The last five minutes saw one great move followed by a near pin after another. Maeda and Kido got in a few blows including some nice kicks by Maeda but it was 95 percent high-class technical display. ****

4. Kazuo Yamazaki pinned Nobuhiko Takada with a german suplex (right) in 23:57. This match consisted of only realistic wrestling moves, extremely hard slaps and severe karate kicks. The fans were mesmerized by this match. UWF is different from other groups because of results like this, since Takada is the bigger star of the two. This bout was even throughout and there was no telling who would win. The kicks, where Yamazaki was superior by a little, were stronger than the actual wrestling, which Takada held a slight edge. These guys are a great even match-up, and this was definitely the best match I've ever seen in my entire life. The two friends I attended this show with agreed. One thought it was the best bout he'd ever seen, the other ranked it behind only the Super Tiger vs Maeda match 9/11 as the best bout in Japan this past year. This match was very close to being a "pure shoot." *****

5. Super Tiger knocked out Yoshiaki Fujiwara in a "real death match" in 27:19. The rules were everything was legal except attacking the eyes and bare-knuckle face punches (body blows were legal and used, the only punches thrown on the card). Chokes were legal as a submission-type hold. Fujiwara was in control most of the first 18:00 or so with quick and strong matwork and Tiger several times used the ropes to break near-submission moves. Tiger's kicks, which were about eight times as severe as Chris Adams, didn't faze Fujiwara. As the bout progressed, Tiger capitalized on a few kicks and used some wrestling. At the 25:00 mark, Tiger landed a kick to the head which was the hardest and most severe blow I've ever seen in wrestling. Fujiwara was literally knocked bananas by this move and although he tried to continue, there was no way and finally it was stopped. Before the bout was stopped Tiger kicked the semi-conscious Fujiwara in the face something like 50 times. This bout was fantastic in a way, but the viciousness and severity of it, plus having to deal with the knockout turned me off. One of the reasons I enjoy wrestling is I can see all the visual violence and never have to deal with the consequences (brain damage, permanent injuries) as in boxing. Most fans seemed to feel as I did, as they remarked, "that isn't wrestling." *****

This card sold out perhaps a week in advance. The building, which supposedly seats 2,800 (I'm skeptical of that) was filled with hundreds of standing room, jammed every available space, with no place to move for nearly three hours. If this was the U.S., there would have been 30 riots. Crowd was announced at 3,250 with prices from \$10 (standing room) to \$25. Although small, this is as nice a building to watch wrestling as I've ever seen. The "sight lines" are perfect. Every seat is like a ringside seat, even the standing room. It was the best card I'd seen all year, although I was to see three superior shows before the week was out.

December 6 - Hiroshima Gym (New Japan Pro Wrestling)

1. Naoki Sano forced Masahiro Chono to submit with a combination armlock and leglock in 11:19. These guys are both very inexperienced and wrestled an amateur freestyle-type match, almost like a UWF opener.
2. Keiichi Yamada and Shoku Kim downed Tatsutoshi Gotoh and Keiji Mutoh in 13:19 when Yamada pinned Mutoh with a diving head-butt. Yamada is called the Japanese Dynamite Kid, is very similar to the Kid when he arrived in Japan at 160 lbs. in his pre-anabolic days. He's far more advanced than any rookie on this planet and uses Kid-moves like the tombstone piledriver, snap suplex, quick dropkicks and the finisher. ***
3. Kerry Brown pinned Shunji Kosugi with a double-arm suplex and an elbow drop off the top ropes. Brown didn't look bad, but he's far too heavy (280+). Kosugi, at 175, couldn't show much although I've heard he's good. 7:09 **
4. Kantaro Hoshino pinned Jerry Morrow in 7:44 of the best bout on the card. They brawled all over the place using chairs and tables. Morrow is fairly good while Hoshino is extremely good, but also extremely small, almost too small to give this win visual credibility. ****
5. Adrian Adonis pinned Tiger Toguchi (Chung Lee) with a powerslam at 9:57. Adonis tried to work but Toguchi didn't care much for the idea. Adonis gained 40 pounds in three weeks on tour, but he can still wrestle well. **
6. Seiji Sakaguchi & Kengo Kimura downed Wild Samoan (Samula Anoaia) & Anoaroe Atisanoe in 12:19 when Kimura used a leg lariat on Sammy. Atisanoe is poor, but is getting a push because his brother is one of the top sumo stars and extremely famous. Sammy was terrible this match, although he was excellent in one bout I saw. He'd better leave the WWF is all I can say. Sakaguchi is a decent older wrestler and Kimura is a very good wrestler, tho not this bout. **
7. Tatsumi Fujinami double count out Dick Murdoch in 11:10. Murdoch was pretty good but Fujinami was disappointing. I'm told both guys were pretty beat up from their sensational tag match the night before. The ending was telegraphed badly. **
8. Antonio Inoki & Andre the Giant downed the Strong Machines in 13:07 when Andre missed a hipdrop by three feet (with a butt as big as Andre's you'd think he'd have no trouble just sitting down and not missing his target but his butt-eye coordination wasn't good the entire match) but still pinned Machine #2. This match was terrible, but not boring. The Machines did nothing on offense because of one guy's size and clumsiness and the other's ego. *
9. Andre won an 11 man Battle Royal for 5 million yen ("¥20,000"). This may have been the worst Battle Royal I've ever seen, except for that calamity they had this summer at the Garden. It only lasted 5:50 and the eliminations were poor. Antonio Egoki was eliminated when the Machines (not involved) and Wakamatsu (who is a complete riot) ran to the ring and he jumped over thus eliminated himself and chased them out. Murdoch was the last fellow. DUD

This card drew 6,500 in a 7,000 seat building. It was by Japan standards a poor card, and by American standards only average with bad main events. The show the previous night in Osaka which drew a sellout 8,500 contained two excellent main events. The first one saw the Machines down Hoshino & Kimura in 12:17. The finish saw three fabulous double-team moves--1) #1 held Hoshino in a fullnelson and #2 came off the top ropes with a twisting leg lariat to the throat; 2) II held Hoshino off the ground in giant swing position and #1 came off with a leg drop; and 3) Finisher saw #1 put him in a piledriver and #2 off the top ropes with a stuff. #2 then threw Kimura outside the ring and dove over the top ropes onto him. **** The other main event was the tag tourney final as Inoki & Fujinami downed Adonis & Murdoch in 33:31 when Inoki was held in mid-air by Murdoch and Adonis was going to lariat him off the top ropes. Inoki kicked Adonis who straddled himself and flipped over Dickie's backward suplex attempt. Egoki then superplexed Adonis and beat him by submission with the octopus. The WWF kingpins dominated this match. **** The rest of the card wasn't worth mentioning.

December 8 - Nagoya Sports Center (All Japan Pro Wrestling)

1. Yoshi Momota pinned Toshiaki Kawada with a side suplex in 11:51
2. Mike Shaw pinned Motoshi Okuma with a big splash at 6:39
3. Goro Tsurumi & One Man Gang beat Akio Sato & Tarzan Gotha in 6:44 when Tsurumi pinned Gotha after a karate thrust off the middle rope. I missed these matches
4. Dynamite Kid & Davey Boy Smith downed Masa Fuchi & Magic Dragon in 11:11 when Kid had Fuchi in a suplex, tagged Smith with a free-hand, Smith climbed the ropes and grabbed Fuchi, then powerslammed him off the top ropes. The highlight of the match saw Fuchi have Smith in a figure-four headlock, both on the mat. Smith, through neck and lower back power, raised Fuchi until he was kneeling up straight with him, then used his legs to stand up straight with Fuchi still on his shoulders with the hold. Smith tagged cuz' then backpedalled to the center of the ring and whamo! Kid came off the top ropes with a dropkick into Fuchi's face, and Fuchi was nine feet off the mat. ****
5. Tiger Jeet Singh pinned Great Kojika with a cobra claw in 6:22 *
6. Harley Race & Nick Bockwinkel downed Mighty Inoue & Takashi Ishikawa

in 7:42 when Nick held Ishikawa in a bearhug. Race came off the top ropes with a lariat on him, then pinned him after a suplex. Bout was surprisingly good by all four. ***

7. Tiger Mask pinned Pirata Morgan in 12:22 with a double armlock turned into a german suplex in the fastest paced match I've ever seen. Morgan is even better than La Fiera in my opinion and I enjoy watching new Tiger as much as any wrestler around. Almost everyone seems to feel he will eventually exceed even the great Sayama. ****¹/₂

8. Jumbo Tsuruta & Genichiro Tenryu downed Giant Baba & Rusher Kimura via count out in 8:25. This bout consisted mainly of all four guys pounding the hell out of each other with hard chops. One thing which doesn't come across on videotapes is just how hard these guys hit and the genuine stinging punishment they take, including Baba. I've got a lot more respect for all four of these guys than I had going in. Tsuruta/Tenryu are one of the best tag teams in the world, I'd personally rate them behind only Brody/Hansen, Kid/Smith, Choshu/Hamaguchi, Murdoch/Adonis and Funks. Anyway, Ryuma Go came to ringside and talked Kimura into turning on Baba and all hell broke loose with Kimura and Go leaving and forfeiting the match. ****

9. Stan Hansen & Bruiser Brody downed Dory & Terry Funk via DQ in 18:42 when Terry used Brody's chain and clobbered ref Joe Higuchi with it. This bout was as good as any bout these four have had with each other, which is about as high a compliment as I can give. *****

This was the best card on the tour. Crowd was announced as a sellout 9,000 which is strange since the building holds 11,500. Riki Choshu and his friends were there and after the final match, Choshu and company got into a melee with Baba, Tsuruta, Tenryu, Okuma, Ishikawa and the whole All Japan crew. Choshu is the most popular wrestler in Japan. I've seen Hulk-a-mania and heard the teenyboppers root for Kerry, but I'd have to say the reaction for Choshu exceeds anything I've seen since '74 when (I hate to say this) Dusty Rhodes first turned babyface in Florida.

December 11 - Osaka Sports Center (All Japan)

1. Nuboyashi Sugawara pinned Tarzan Gotha in 8:27 with a "face crusher." It starts like a piledriver, then becomes a forward power slam. Kind of like what Mad Dog Vachon winds up doing when he tries a "driver," but of course not as pathetic looking. Good workrate for an opener, but Sugawara missed his most difficult moves. ***¹/₂

2. Ryuma Go pinned Yoshi Momota with a back suplex. **

3. Great Kojika & Akio Sato over Mike Shaw & One Man Gang via DQ when Gang hit the ref in 8:08. Gang is better than you would think in Japan, but Shaw is terrible. **

4. Kid & Smith over Fuchi & Inoue in 11:42 when Kid used the diving head-butt on Fuchi. Fuchi is the most underrated of the All Japan boys. He looked excellent in this bout, and not just because he was in with the most exciting pair around. ****¹/₂

5. Singh double count out Motoshi Okuma in 1:51. This was actually very entertaining and they battled all over the building for several minutes after the bell. **

6. Tiger Mask & Magic Dragon over El Egipicio & Pirata Morgan when Tiger pinned Morgan with the Tiger suplex in 11:18. This was the best bout of Tiger's career and if not for the presence of Egipicio occasionally with Dragon, it would have received the maximum five stars. End saw three straight dives out of the ring. Tiger's was the first, and the best. He dove over the top rope, did a flip in mid-air and splashed onto Egipicio. He's done this before, but Egipicio was very far away from the ring. Morgan then dove through the ropes at Tiger, and Dragon dove through at Morgan. Remember Morgan's name. ****¹/₂

7. Funks over Rusher Kimura & Goro Tsurumi in 7:59 when Terry pinned Tsurumi with a rolling cradle hold. ***

8. Hansen & Brody beat Baba & Ishikawa in 7:24 when they stuff-piledrove Baba and Hansen pinned him. Bout was all action and tons of fun. ****¹/₂

9. Tsuruta & Tenryu went to a 30:00 draw with Race & Bockwinkel. Everyone but Nick was tremendous in this bout. First 20:00 were good, last 10:00 were fantastic. Race and Tenryu bled and they brawled all over the building after the bout ended. ****

This card was also fantastic and it sold out to the tune of 9,000 maybe a half-hour in advance. This was TV night however unfortunately Tiger Mask's match wasn't taped.

December 12 - Yokohama Bunka Taikukan (All Japan)

1. Mike Shaw pinned Yoshi Momota in 6:57 with a splash off the middle ropes
2. One Man Gang pinned Tarzan Gotha with a big splash in 4:28. I missed these bouts

3. Kuniaki Kobayashi & Isamu Teranishi made their AJPW debuts to a fantastic reception downing Ryuma Go & Nuboyashi Sugawara in 10:59 when Kobayashi pinned Sugawara with a fisherman suplex (vertical suplex with the leg hooked and bridging pin). Kobayashi is an excellent wrestler. All four were quite good in this bout, however. ****¹/₂

4. Kid & Smith beat Masa Fuchi & Toshiaki Kawada in 10:28 when Smith pinned Kawada after a powerslam off the top ropes. This was the best match Kawada has ever wrestled. He just turned 21 four days earlier and turned pro about seven months after winning the high school national freestyle title at 165 in March '82. He's going to be really good, in fact he already is good. Fuchi and Smith had their best matches of the tour. This was the best bout on the card with all due respect for the main event. **** $\frac{1}{2}$
5. Riki Choshu & Animal Hamaguchi & Yoshiaki Yatsu made their debuts destroying Takashi Ishikawa & Great Kojika & Motoshi Okuma in 12:11. End saw Choshu pick fat Okuma up and hold him in back suplex position, tagged Yatsu with a free-hand who kneedropped Okuma who was six feet in the air from off the top ropes. Choshu tagged back in and won after a Saito suplex and lariat. These guys are the best working threesome I've ever seen. This bout also had more "heat" than any bout of the tour, despite it being a squash. Choshu just brings that kind of reaction to a crowd. Bout was all-action and great from start to finish. ****
6. Tiger Jeet Singh & Goro Tsurumi & Rusher Kimura downed Giant Baba & Akio Sato & Magic Dragon in 8:03 when Kimura pinned Dragon after a bulldog headlock. Singh chased fans for several minutes after the match, including in the second deck. All action brawling and surprisingly good. ***
7. Tiger Mask & Mighty Inoue downed Pirata Morgan & El Egipicio in 12:13 when Tiger german suplexed Egipicio. This wasn't on the level as the previous Tiger Mask bouts. **** $\frac{1}{2}$
8. The Funks drew Race & Bockwinkel over 30:00 in a tag tournament match. Going into the finals, Brody-Hansen had 10 points while Tsuruta-Tenryu, Race-Bockwinkel and Funks had 9, thus they were all eligible to win the thing going into this card. What a coincidence, huh! Anyway, one point for a draw made it a three-way tie for first, thus giving these possibilities for the outcome in the next match: 1) A draw or double count out would give Brody/Hansen the title; 2) Any win by either Brody/Hansen or Jumbo/Tenryu would win it for them; 3) A double DDQ would end up a three-way-tie. Back to the Funks' match, it was good action with little resting but they didn't get all that much crowd reaction. ***
9. Tsuruta & Tenryu won the tourney downing Hansen & Brody via DQ in 18:47. Tenryu bled at 12:00 and Brody three min. later. Bout was fantastic with many near pins on both sides. End saw Brody have Jumbo in a piledriver and Hansen was going to stuff him, ref Higuchi got in the way so Stan decked him causing a cheap ending but the only possible end I guess. Because Tsuruta/Tenryu vs Choshu/Hamaguchi is the big money feud in '85, the Japan pair had to win this tourney. **** $\frac{1}{2}$

Crowd was announced at 6,100 but the building, which sold out several days in advance holds 8,500 and there were many hundreds of standing room as well. The fans actually booed Kimura, Singh and Choshu's foes which is the first time I've ever heard of booing in Japan. Upper deck tickets were \$16 and ringside \$40 so the gate approached \$200,000. There were more fantastic wrestlers on this card than any card on any circuit in several years.

December 13 - Tokyo Korauken Hall (Japan Pro Wrestling)

1. Toshiaki Kawada pinned Shinji Sasasaki in 8:12 with a boston crab. Very good opener, Kawada gets better by the day. ** $\frac{1}{2}$
2. Fumuhiko Niikura pinned Shinichi Nakano in 10:15 with a german suplex in the second best bout on the card. Niikura is really great. Many near falls on both sides though Niikura was carrying Nakano. **** $\frac{1}{4}$
3. Haruka Eigen pinned Masanobu Kurusu in 8:26 with a small package. This was shockingly good and funny as hell. They beat each other to death with chops and rams into the ringpost. Both bled as well. ***
4. Kuniaki Kobayashi & Nobuo Honaga over Pirata Morgan & El Egipicio when Kobayashi fisherman suplexed Morgan in 8:36. Kobayashi and Morgan were great, the other two weren't. ** $\frac{1}{2}$
5. Dynamite Kid pinned Isamu Teranishi in 10:58 with the diving head-butt. Believe it or not, this was the worst match on the card. ** $\frac{1}{2}$
6. Animal Hamaguchi & Yoshiaki Yatsu downed Mighty Inoue & Masa Fuchi in 11:47 when Hamaguchi pinned Fuchi with a blockbuster after a flying double lariat and Yatsu's belly-to-belly suplex. Fuchi was fantastic and Yatsu and Hamaguchi were even better. ****
7. Riki Choshu pinned Davey Boy Smith in 7:39 with a lariat. Smith did a superplex and dropkick off the top rope, then missed a diving head-butt. Bout really was good, but not nearly what you would think it could be. ***

Crowd was announced at 3,000 which is of course a sellout with some standing room, but not nearly as many as at the UWF show.

By the way, while on this tour Smith celebrated his 22nd birthday and his cousin Dynamite turned 26. Morgan and Tiger Mask are also both only 22 and they've got several young guys like Niikura, Yamada, Kawada in their early 20s as well. Both Takada and Yamazaki are also just 22 and Maeda is 25. That's the real difference. Our wrestlers in their early 20s are The Terminators and the American Starship or Mike Von Erich. Bockwinkel celebrated birthday No. 50 on tour as well.

1984 WRESTLING OBSERVER AWARDS

These are the results of the balloting of Observer readers. Points were given on a 5-3-2 basis for first, second and third place on each individual ballot. With each category will be comments from Mr. Mike, myself and several readers. In addition, with each category I will list the previous winners of this award in this magazine. The votes in parenthesis are the number of first place mentions.

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1. RIC FLAIR (106).....518
2. Dynamite Kid (11).....184
3. Bruiser Brody (2).....175
4. Hulk Hogan (10).....128
5. Riki Choshu (7).....73

Honorable Mention: Super Tiger 71, Roddy Piper 66, Kerry Von Erich 51

Mr. Mike: "This is somewhat less definite than last year. One good candidate, Super Tiger (Satoru Sayama) has been impossible to see unless you live in Japan. Still, even though Flair lost the title to Kerry Von Erich, it didn't last long and we all understand the circumstances. It's too bad the promotions and cities recognizing the N.W.A. title have dwindled somewhat because for work, ability, interviews, travel, etc. he's No. 1. Hulk Hogan won't even be considered here. We're all seeing first-hand why so many veteran pros scoff at the very idea of Hulk being a World champ. In wanting to consider ability for this category, one naturally looks to Japan so Dynamite Kid is No. 2. Brody No. 3 needs no explanation."

Meltzer: "Flair is the obvious No. 1. If the WWF had lost Hulk for whatever reason, whomever his replacement would have been could do every bit as well at the gate. If the NWA had lost Flair, well, it's not a pleasant thought. I picked Super Tiger second because he was the key in making a promotion with a different philosophy a viable one, not to mention his great skill and the news he made the first six months not wrestling. I picked Piper third."

Larry Lovell: "Flair and Hogan are obvious choices and I chose Brody third because he revitalized interest in the AWA after Hulk left."

Grant Zwarych: "A lot of readers will question Hogan No. 2 behind Flair because he's not a good wrestler. However, his signing to the WWF was a major blow for Vince and against the AWA. His size and publicity make non-fans believe he is the real World champ. His popularity and his ability to talk (even if it's all babble) make him important to the world of wrestling."

- 1980 - Harley Race
- 1981 - Ric Flair
- 1982 - Ric Flair
- 1983 - Ric Flair
- 1984 - Ric Flair

BEST BABY FACE

1. HULK HOGAN (48).....372
2. Kerry Von Erich (37).....323
3. Sgt. Slaughter (15).....193
4. Riki Choshu (16).....96
5. Jerry Lawler (6).....88

Honorable Mention: Jimmy Snuka 73, Dusty Rhodes 41, Ricky Steamboat 39

MM: "It's been a bad year in the AWA for this. No one can be considered. Our best are the Roadies, except they're supposed to be heels. Verne can't figure that one out. Going by fan response of what I've seen I'll go with Kerry, Slaughter and Snuka. Hulk is a close fourth and Lawler deserves mention. It bugs me to lump so many WWF guys together, but they do market their legends well. I didn't like the Slaughter-Sheik series, but it was strong at the gate. The emotion Snuka can raise is amazing, in no small part due to Piper."

DM: "Having seen Hulk, Kerry, Slaughter, Snuka and Choshu live, the ones who got the best reaction were Choshu first, Kerry second and Hulk third; however I switched second and third based on Hulk's national exposure and theoretically much greater drawing power. I know Choshu is supposed to be a heel, but I didn't see anyone more popular this year."

LL: "Slaughter's 'super patriot' bit went over in a big way and other promotions soon followed suit. Hulk is an obvious second but I wonder how much heat he would gather if his entrance music disappeared. I picked Kerry third."

Bob Closson: "Hogan does nothing for me but he gets the fans excited and people make a point to see him live. I went with Snuka second because he's the most popular wrestler in the WWF and Slaughter, who brings out high emotion in fans, third." Norm Dooley: "I picked Hulk first because of universal appeal, Idol second because he's so charismatic and Lawler third because his mannerisms really excite a crowd and his appeal isn't as local as it used to be."

- 1980 - Dusty Rhodes
- 1981 - Tommy Rich
- 1982 - Hulk Hogan
- 1983 - Hulk Hogan
- 1984 - Hulk Hogan

BEST HEEL

1. RODDY PIPER (70).....440
 2. Iron Sheik (17).....139
 3. Bruiser Brody (13).....127
 - Michael Hayes (8).....127
 5. Butch Reed (5).....117
- Honorable Mention: Paul Orndorff 114, Kevin Sullivan 71, Riki Choshu 46, Chris Adams 40

MM: "No one had the opportunities, nor made as much of them as has Roderick Piper in 1984. He's one guy who hasn't been misused although

his in-ring action is very sub par. No other WWF heel comes close. In the AWA, the best bet is Brody. With few appearances and interviews he's made his presence felt. I could write a book on how great he could be used and how much fun turning him good guy could be. The Roadies could be mentioned except for their role confusion. I won't consider Michael Hayes because of his identity crisis. He doesn't know if he wants to be a wrestler or not. What does rock music have that wrestling doesn't? Uncut snow? I thought Ric Rude has done a great job in Memphis as the arrogant narcissus. I can't tell who the heels and babyfaces are in Japan, but I went with Choshu third."

DM: "Piper was No. 1 by a mile. Iron Sheik gets great reaction but I didn't vote for him because it's nothing that he does which inspires the reaction, just where he comes from. I thoroughly enjoyed Reed in Mid South because the hatred came because he was so good. Hayes at his best is the best heel around, and he was great until he left Dallas, however for no logical reason I had to pick Rude third. He comes off so obnoxious he can't be ignored."

BC: "Piper No. 1 because he always tries so hard to get the fans to hate him. Hayes next because after he left Texas it became obvious who was the real draw. He would've been first had he stayed all year. Orndorff third because it was easier for him to get fans to hate him than Piper."

1980 - Larry Zbyszko

1981 - Don Muraco

1982 - Buzz Sawyer

1983 - Michael Hayes

1984 - Roddy Piper

FEUD OF THE YEAR

1. VON ERICHS vs FREEBIRDS (36)...339
 2. Ishingun vs Seikigun (54).....330
 3. Slaughter vs Sheik (23).....201
 4. Piper vs Snuka (11).....99
 5. Blackwell vs Brody (6).....69
- Honorable Mention: Midnight Express vs Rock'n'Roll Express 62, Flair vs Steamboat 60, Lawler vs Rude 52, Cobra vs Dynamite Kid 40

MM: "Since I'm so down on most promoting this past year, this is harder to pick than usual. I can't pick Freebirds-Von Erichs even though they did it to death because without David it lost too much and because of the Birds' identity crisis. The fans didn't know from card to card or some nights from match to match whether to cheer or jeer. Well, actually they did know. The problem was they did both. I liked the Duggan vs Russians stuff from early this year in Mid South. The Midnight Express vs Rock'n'Roll Express looked like it went over well, but it didn't do much for me except point out the talents of Jimmy Cornette as a heel manager. The best AWA feud was Blackwell vs Brody which I picked second. Their St. Paul Lights Out

Match was excellent considering it was in the AWA. I can't pick any WWF feud based on the quality of the matches. Snuka-Piper was hot at the gate and the bouts approached awful. Japan is largely a confusion point but I know they had that great Seikigun vs Ishingun feud, but what the hell do those terms mean? I picked Dynamite Kid vs Cobra third. The bouts I saw were terrific. DM: To me the Japanese Ishingun-Seikigun feud had it all. Great crowds, great heat, a logic premise and above all, the best matches. The Slaughter-Sheik feud was great at the gate, the premise turned me off but the reason I won't pick it is because of the dozen bouts I saw between the two, just one was outstanding and several were downright bad. The Piper-Snuka bouts were far worse, mainly because half the time Jimmy didn't show up and the other half he wasn't there as well. I grew tired of Freebirds-Von Erichs, however every 6 man tag bout I saw was great and it always drew well, so I picked it second. I was close for third between Dynamite vs Cobra and Flair vs Steamboat, but went with the latter because of all the great 35 to 60 minute battles and I loved the set-up. There's something about seeing Flair and Steamboat in the Carolinas that makes me nostalgic. Roland Messier: "Ishingun vs Seikigun could best be described as a war. I went with Flair-Steamboat second for the great build-up and great matches and Slaughter-Sheik third. Their bouts were fantastic and filled with action, even though the idea behind it was ignorant."

BC: "Ishingun vs Seikigun could be the feud of the decade. I went with Freebirds vs Von Erichs second and Express vs Express third. Jim Cornett did for Mid South what Hayes did for World Class. They brought a new era in tag team wrestling to the area. ND: "Express vs Express had incredible matches, great build-up and drew record crowds. Lawler vs Savage was second for the same reasons. I picked Garvin vs Adams third even if it did go on much too long. The initial Sunshine-Precious-Garvin split was done very well." Steve Munari: "I really enjoyed Express vs Express. Almost every angle was done well, it drew well and had great matches. I picked Lawler vs Rude second because some of the things done with Angel were great. I also enjoyed Reed vs Master G."

1980 - Sammartino vs Zbyszko

1981 - Andre vs Khan

1982 - DiBiase vs Junkyard Dog

1983 - Freebirds vs Von Erichs

1984 - Freebirds vs Von Erichs

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

1. ROAD WARRIORS (59).....369
 2. Smith/Kid (26).....274
 3. Brody/Hansen (34).....256
 4. Adonis/Murdoch (13).....163
 5. Choshu/Hamaguchi (12).....151
- Honorable Mention: Condrey/Eaton 72

MM: "I went with the Warriors first, certainly not because they deliver great matches but because of their aura and incredible cross-promotional importance. Who else has been important to so many diverse circuits in the same year? I went with Adonis/Murdoch next, perhaps I'm too charitable but I think they sometimes are a tremendous team. Try not to hold their utterly worthless opponents against them. Brody/Hansen need no introduction but I didn't see enough of their '84 stuff so I picked Kid/Smith third but coming up fast are the Strong Machines.

DM: "This was the hardest category for me to pick. I wanted to squeeze in all the top five teams but limited to three I went for ability, thus Brody/Hansen first, followed by Choshu/Hamaguchi and Smith/Kid. I recognize the Warriors as the most important team and in fact the hottest new act in years, but couldn't bring myself to pick them above such a strong group."

SM: "Brody/Hansen are best summed up by watching them. No team is more spectacular than Kid/Smith. While the Midnight Express aren't a household word, they work fantastic together."

GZ: "No one has better teamwork than Choshu/Hamaguchi. I could watch them for hours."

- 1980 - Terry Gordy/Buddy Roberts
- 1981 - Terry Gordy/Jimmy Snuka
- 1982 - Ole Anderson Stan Hansen
- 1983 - Ricky Steamboat/Jay Youngblood
- 1984 - Road Warriors

MOST IMPROVED

1. THE COBRA (32).....244
2. Kerry Von Erich (4).....100
3. Tiger Mask (14).....94
4. Hercules Hernandez (7).....78
5. Tonga Kid (11).....67

Honorable Mention: Jesse Barr 61, Brian Blair 46, Nobuhiko Takada 41, Buddy Landell 40, Brian Adidas 38

MM: "No. 1 is easy. When I first saw Cobra in '83 he was excellent, but missing a certain smoothness. He's got it now. I'm unable to judge most Japanese talent, so I'll pick Krusher Kruschev second and Hernandez third. Ric Rude made great improvements this year as well."

DM: "The new Tiger Mask came out of nowhere to become an excellent wrestler. I've got to pick him first. I never thought much of Jesse Barr, and I'm still not convinced, but there is a big improvement and I had him third. Khruschev was terrible when the year started and good at the end, so I went with him second. Actually

there are many others like Adidas, who went from terrible to moderately good; Hiro Saito (bad to quite good); Buddy Landell (average to quite good) and Kazuo Yamazaki (nowhere to great) who I'd like to list as well."

BC: "Cobra went from someone I didn't like to someone I truly admire."

ND: "Arn Anderson was average last year, but he's now very good. Rude improved greatly in Memphis. Third goes to Pat Rose who is much better than a year ago and works well in tags."

SM: "Hercules Hernandez is great compared to a year ago and unbelievably compared to two years ago. Landell was damn good last year but he's gotten even better. Randy Savage was also very good last year, but his interview image has turned into something I really enjoy now."

1980 - Larry Zbyszko

1981 - Adrian Adonis

1982 - Jim Duggan

1983 - Curt Hennig

1984 - The Cobra

MOST IMPRESSIVE

1. DYNAMITE KID (96).....562
 2. Ric Flair (24).....244
 3. Davey Boy Smith (8).....190
 4. Super Tiger (7).....107
 5. Tiger Mask.....45
- Honorable Mention: Bruiser Brody 42

MM: "I'm trying to separate non-wrestling acrobatics and ridiculous non-moves (like big guy's finishers) that require total selling on the part of the victims. Flair (#1) and Kid (#2) are easy, obvious and interchangeable. I'm proving I'm demented picking Adonis #3 even though it hasn't been a good year for him. I think he's looked as good as humanly possible under his present circumstance. I look for a wrestler with good size, ability, stamina and smarts enough to develop a match that is technically interesting and exciting to watch."

DM: "Kid, Flair and Super Tiger in that order."

SM: "First must go to Kid. Tiger Mask has been phenomenal and third goes to Brody."

BC: "Kid always gives people there money's worth, followed by Flair and Smith. To see Kid and Smith wrestle each other is poetry in motion."

1980 - Ken Patera

1981 - Don Muraco

1982 - Tiger Mask (Super Tiger)

1983 - Dynamite Kid

1984 - Dynamite Kid

MOST WASHED UP

1. JIMMY SNUKA (26).....228
2. Jay Strongbow (14).....105
3. Tito Santana (8).....86
4. The Crusher (11).....75
5. Hulk Hogan (2).....73

Honorable Mention: Mad Dog Vachon 59, Giant Baba 49, Dusty Rhodes 43, Antonio Inoki 42, Don Muraco 42, Ken Patera 40, Jake Roberts 40, Junkyard Dog 39

MM: "Who lost it the most this past year, for whatever reasons, surroundings, bad habits, or even age catching up? Should we pick on Jimmy Snuka again after his disastrous year in '83? Sure! Isn't it amusing the guy's nickname is Superfly. I'll bet you thought it was because he does spectacular leaps. He lost a lot in '83, but '84 was a banner year as well. Don Muraco has been inactive most of the year, but he looks washed up sitting on the Hawaiian beaches. Hulk Hogan is third, he's gotten boring, tired and repetitive. Has Jim Garvin forgotten how to wrestle, or did he just never know how to begin with?"

DM: "This isn't a category to pick the old guys like Crusher. Maybe we'll have to pick two categories next year--most washed up for the year and most years washed up. For the year--Snuka by and large lost it late in '83 as the ending of his Muraco feud was a dud after some great early matches. He dropped farther into the scrap heap, however others are more deserving. Patera has gone from good to almost useless, Jim Garvin hasn't had a good match since Christmas '83, Gino Hernandez is boring in every way although he hasn't been "involved" in wrestling since '83 either. Jake Roberts became terrible in Atlanta, and going to Dallas has accentuated that decline. Kevin Von Erich has mentally given up on wrestling, he's the odds-on winner for '85. Santana and Valentine fell a lot this past year, so did Slaughter. Notice how many of these guys are from World Class and WWF? Still, the No. 1 disappointment and most useless waste of a great talent is Buzz Sawyer. He's pathetic to watch. I'll follow with Garvin and Jake."

LL: "Santana's arena bouts were some of the slowest anywhere, even by WWF standards."

SM: "I picked Hernandez first because I thought he was a good wrestler last year. He's been atrocious this year. Hogan has already run his course. Whatever borderline talent he showed early in the year in Japan has vanished into his inflated ego. As a wrestler, Piper must qualify for third. I used to enjoy watching him, how he shows absolutely nothing."

RM: "I enjoyed watching Snuka, even in '83. Now he is unbearable to watch."

1980 - Baron Scicluna
1981 - Peter Maivia
1982 - Billy Graham
1983 - Jay Strongbow
1984 - Jimmy Snuka

MOST OBNOXIOUS

1. VINCE MCMAHON (90).....510
2. Gorilla Monsoon (4).....96
3. Lord Al Hayes (9).....85
4. Angelo Mosca (5).....68
5. Hulk Hogan (2).....61
Honorable Mention: Gordon Solie 55,
Ole Anderson 54, Jack Reynolds 43,

Gene Okerlund 42

MM: "A tough category because leading candidates abound. So many might pick Vinnie, but I'm beginning to love the guy. His sense of humor and love of poor taste is phenomenal. However Vince employs the most obnoxious personalities around. I'm dividing this into two groups, obnoxious wrestlers and their announcing counterparts. Obnoxious wrestlers are headed by Rufus Jones, Tommy Rich and all-time champ Dusty Rhodes, ego exceeded only by waist size. They induce physical nausea. Obnoxious announcers are led by Al Hayes, Mosca (and he'll qualify as a wrestler as well), AWA great Rancid Rod Tronquard who's been almost eliminated from the airwaves. Silenced by the WWF, but not missed is all-time champ Rodger Kent. The worst announcer however is the former best, Gordon Solie. His obvious disdain for the business begs the obvious question. In a special event, from Dallas comes Stella Mae French, aging bull dyke and David Manning, the classic goon wimp. Limited to three it's Solie, Rufus (a double threat, in the ring and at the mike) and Tronquard."

DM: "Where to you start. Well, Vinnie is where you start. Of the others, I've got to pick Dusty and Solie but I don't know how I can leave out Monsoon, Hogan, Ole, T-Bolt. . . . I guess what put those three over the top is I fully expect Vince to kill my interest in wrestling, Dusty to kill wrestling in the Carolinas, and Solie to make me kill my television set early one Saturday morning."

Vic Sherberg: "How can you only pick three. Bob Luce has to be seen and heard to be believed. The only good thing about the WWA is it appears to be dead. The Boyd-Blanchard circus could make anyone sick."

RM: "I'd pick every WWF announcer but I'm limited to three--Vinnie, Mosca and Hayes"

LL: "Putting aside my feelings for his promotional tactics, Vinnie still comprises the most obnoxious personality on the tube. Okerlund turned in some awful color work when he wasn't busy licking Vince's boots. Monsoon is in good company."

SM: "I hate to be obvious, but the Johnny Carson of wrestling has first nailed down tight. Whether it be behind the screen or behind the scenes you can count on him to make you puke. I can always count on Bill Mercer (World Class TV host) to say something stupid early in the show to turn me off the rest of the hour. Solie rounds out the top three to keep it among non-athletes."

Rich Dorf: "Vince could make a baby crawl back into the womb, Al Hayes can make a gay turn straight and Junkyard Dog can make blacks turn white"

1981 - Gene LeBelle

- 1982 - David Crockett
 1983 - Vince McMahon Jr.
 1984 - Vince McMahon Jr.

BEST ON INTERVIEWS

1. JIMMY HART (46).....332
 2. Roddy Piper (35).....287
 3. Ric Flair (29).....276
 4. Jerry Lawler (3).....96
 5. Michael Hayes (6).....58
- Honorable Mention: Lou Albano 55,
 Jim Cornette 48

MM: "The element so necessary to being the complete wrestling package. How many guys combine wit, style, delivery, originality while trying to resell tired old shit? It's not easy. For those consistently great, don't confuse quantity with quality (bye bye Roddy) I go with Hart, a true maniac who loves what wrestling appears to be, Flair and a guy who kills me every time, Road Warrior Hawk. He's got a true sick sense of humor."

DM: "For sheer comedy I've got to go with Hart first and Albano second. Flair has always been really good, but I've noticed he's getting a bit burned out. Every interview sounds like one you've already heard. Lawler is too busy trying to be a comedian to be funny. I've got to pick Piper third if you exclude his Pit where he redoes the same routine each week. His local promo stuff is outstanding and he must do about 50 of them each week."

- 1981 - Roddy Piper/Lou Albano (tie)
 1982 - Roddy Piper
 1983 - Roddy Piper
 1984 - Jimmy Hart

MOST CHARISMATIC

1. RIC FLAIR (48).....319
 2. Michael Hayes (24).....224
 3. Hulk Hogan (17).....211
 4. Kerry Von Erich (22).....194
 5. Riki Choshu (17).....162
- Honorable Mention: Roddy Piper 40,
 Dusty Rhodes 36

MM: "For me, personally, nobody beats Brody. I'm not sure what charisma is, but Brody's got it. The mob at large may not agree, but what do they know. Then come a sick slew of baby faces, best of which, judging by crowd reaction are Snuka, Hayes, Flair, Hogan and Kerry Von Erich. However Hogan can't thrive in the midst of overexposure. Kerry, being execrable on the mike, had better be charismatic to all those fantasizing 14-year-olds. I'll go with Brody, Flair and Snuka."

DM: "To me, charisma is someone who can do nothing and get a crowd reaction. I know, that describes Hulk Hogan to a T. Actually to me the most charismatic guys are the Road Warriors. They get more cheers than any heels I've ever seen or heard of. I'll pick Choshu second because he can work 90 seconds and have smart fans thinking he's as good as anyone."

I'll pick Mike Hayes third because he could read a phone book and it could wind up being a good interview. Unless of course, Dave Wolfe and Cyndi Lauper are around."

- 1980 - Ric Flair
 1981 - Michael Hayes
 1982 - Dusty Rhodes/Ric Flair (tie)
 1983 - Ric Flair
 1984 - Ric Flair

BEST TECHNICAL WRESTLER

1. DYNAMITE KID (33).....207
 - MASA SAITO (29).....207
 3. Tatsumi Fujinami (18).....188
 4. Super Tiger (13).....152
 5. Chavo Guerrero (8).....72
- Honorable Mention: Ric Flair 71,
 Keith Hayward 65, Yoshiaki Fujiwara 43, Nobuhiko Takada 40

MM: "The one criteria which doesn't seem to matter anymore. It's still a rare treat to watch actual great wrestling and those best able to deliver that I've seen are Flair, Kid and Guerrero. Cobra and Davey Boy Smith are great, but I'm trying to be careful not to confuse acrobatics and gymnastics which wrestling. Some people put down the Japanese because it's so gymnastic but the above guys can all really wrestle, work and plan a match which is really what it's all about."

DM: "To me, this category is for guys who can incorporate genuine wrestling moves into the pro style and keep the matches entertaining. This leaves out U.S. boys like Backlund and Rheingans who can probably "shoot" with the best of them. From what I've seen, Hayward is the best. He does moves I've never seen and is smooth as silk. Above all, he's entertaining in the pro style (although not U.S. style). Fujiwara might be the strongest technically of the UWF boys, however his style didn't carry over well into New Japan. Takada's style did however and I picked him third, with Fujinami second. Both Choshu and Saito are very close and Super Tiger has always been great, but the only time I saw him he did nothing but kick with just a token amount of wrestling. I wasn't as impressed with Guerrero as much this year as in the past, although he's still in the league with the rest of them. I consider Kid more of a brawler than a technical wrestler."

- 1980 - Bob Backlund
 1981 - Ted DiBiase
 1982 - Tiger Mask (Super Tiger)
 1983 - Tiger Mask (Super Tiger)
 1984 - Dynamite Kid/Masa Saito tie

BEST BRAWLER

1. BRUISER BRODY (132).....720
2. Stan Hansen (7).....282
3. Terry Gordy (4).....169
4. Jerry Lawler (7).....64
5. Paul Orndorff.....52

MM: "Are they all this easy. Anyone who reads these sheets know the profound respect the Mondo Maniacs have for the Goodish one. Following closely is his Jap-land buddy Hansen. Edging out that man of unlimited potential Gordy for third is one truly wild mother, Randy Savage."

DM: "I must be the only one, but I consider Dynamite Kid a brawling wrestler. Most of what he does aside from the dazzling moves and and snap suplexes are hard, hard punches and forearms. So I picked him second with Hansen edging out Gordy for third."

- 1980 - Bruiser Brody
- 1981 - Bruiser Brody
- 1982 - Bruiser Brody
- 1983 - Bruiser Brody
- 1984 - Bruiser Brody

MOST AGILE WRESTLER

1. DYNAMITE KID (57).....367
2. The Cobra (30).....264
3. Tiger Mask (26).....262
4. Super Tiger (18).....194
5. El Gran Hamada (5).....58

MM: "The best technical guys are also agile, of course. My entire agility list is Japan derived I notice. There isn't a whole lot of athletic gracefulness around here. The agility of Dynamite and D.B.Smith has varied over the years depending upon weight, but has never suffered much. I'm real impressed with the new Tiger Mask and want to see more. Although I picked three jr. heavyweights in Dynamite, Cobra and new Tiger Mask, I don't want to ignore agile big buys. One of the most impressive is Brody. Adonis, for his physique is unbelievable. Not quite as big, but still a full-fledged heavyweight is Strong Machine #2 (Riki Bassan) who flies out of the ring like the best jr. heavyweight."

DM: "I had to pick Cobra first over Tiger Mask because Misawa wrestles mainly a Mexican style, in other words the moves look too set up at times for my taste. I went with Super Tiger third although he doesn't do the flying dives out of the ring like before, however his agility in doing genuine wrestling moves is tremendous."

RD: "Dynamite Kid shows everyone something in each match. Super Tiger is unbelievable and the Tonga Kid has come a long way very quickly."

- 1981 - Jimmy Snuka
- 1982 - Tiger Mask (Super Tiger)
- 1983 - Tiger Mask (Super Tiger)
- 1984 - Dynamite Kid

STRONGEST

1. BUTCH REED (70).....366
 2. Road Warrior Animal (26).....243
 3. Tony Atlas (15).....146
 4. Road Warrior Hawk (2).....96
 5. Hulk Hogan (6).....76
- Honorable Mention: John Studd 73,
Ken Patera 71, Davey Boy Smith 47

MM: "This one distresses me. This most overhyped aspect of wrestlers makes it difficult to get past the brainwashing. When they lie about the lifts of legitimate medal winners like Ken Patera, why try to figure it out? The reason this category is bothersome is many wrestlers "perhaps might be" the strongest as John Studd. What a pathetic waste if true. For his large size, he looks so lacking in power that it's painful to watch. It's hard to deny Patera as one of the strongest since he keeps up with serious lifting. There are so many bodybuilders in wrestling it's easy to confuse them with actual super strong weight lifters. Atlas is a very strong bodybuilder. I think Hogan is legitimately strong but when does he show it? Reed denies he's the strongest, but he's close. I don't want to ignore Road Warrior Animal. He looks evil and is extremely strong for his height. I haven't been able to evaluate Hercules Hernandez or Nikita Koloff yet. I picked Patera, Studd then Animal, which is not to suggest they actually show their strength in the ring."

DM: "I picked this category based on strength display in the ring, preferably when used in legitimate moves. Animal exudes power in the ring, however I've never seen him do the press with people as large as those Reed or Atlas presses. Still I picked him first, if only because Reed "cheats" on his press slams, resting the guy on his head instead of pressing him from the shoulders. I went with Reed second and Smith third. Smith may not be freaky large, although he's very big, but for the most part the strength he shows, especially the full-body strength rather than just shoulder strength and arm strength, is done doing legitimate moves. I wanted to pick Jerry Olski who is a genuine wrestling powerhouse rather than just a strong lifter but I'm stuck with three. Actually Rheingans may be stronger in a wrestling sense than any of them, but since his rookie days of suplexing Jerry Blackwell all over the ring, he never shows it. I'd like to also mention El Canek from Mexico who is very strong as well. For a strength/agility package he and Smith are tops with Brody not far behind."

RD: "Reed's overhead press is the most impressive."

RM: "Reed's strength displays make everything look so easy. Roadies are very energetic which makes them look impressively strong."

- 1981 - Tony Atlas
- 1982 - Ken Patera
- 1983 - Hulk Hogan
- 1984 - Butch Reed

MOST OVERRATED

- 1. JOHN STUDD (28).....225
 - 2. Hulk Hogan (29).....183
 - 3. Junkyard Dog (23).....181
 - 4. Dusty Rhodes (11).....175
 - 5. Ivan Putski (18).....150
- Honorable Mention: Andre the Giant 115, Jimmy Snuka 85, Giant Baba 58, Tito Santana 43, Brutus Beefcake 43

MM: "What fun. Another chance to dump on the heroes. Most promotions overhype and lots of fans buy it hook, line and sinker. The WWF has it down to an art form. It's one of the great mysteries of wrestling how it's decided who gets what push. We know in the WWF it's who can work best with entrance music, depending of course what song Vinnie wants to introduce to his audience. We all have favorites, but highly regarded guys by the public, if not readers of the Observer that are inalterably unworthy based on skill and effort are Andre (I wonder which museum gets him), Studd (great size, allegedly strong, never shows it) and Rhodes (The American Slob)."

DM: "Where do we start? I'd love to pick Hogan for a top three spot but I just can't. Hogan isn't good but he isn't nearly pathetic. Junkyard Dog is one of the worst wrestlers I've ever seen. I'll go with Snuka second because most fans truly believe the guy still can do something. Third was tough between Rhodes and Studd, but Dusty gets my nod. I'd like to make special mention of Mike Von Erich as well. Mike isn't as bad as JYD, Studd or Dusty and shows more than Snuka in an average match, but his physical credibility is zilch. One of the hardest matches to watch all year was Mike destroying Flair in a 10 minute draw in his second month as a pro." Actually it's a compliment to WWF marketing that they can get so many wrestlers overpromoted like they do. It isn't hard to fool a lot of fans, but they certainly do the best job of it."

RD: "JYD has no ring ability whatsoever, Rhodes is a slob's slob and Putski is a shmuck's shmuck."

LL: "JYD's crawling head-butt which his opponents are required to sell is pathetic. Garvin and Santana follow (Ron Garvin)."

- 1980 - Mr. Wrestling II
- 1981 - Pedro Morales
- 1982 - Pedro Morales
- 1983 - Bob Backlund
- 1984 - John Studd

MOST UNDERRATED

- 1. BRIAN BLAIR (27).....225
 - 2. Nobuhiko Takada (18).....127
 - 3. Ron Starr (3).....84
 - 4. Dynamite Kid (9).....79
 - 5. Don Kernodle (12).....60
- Honorable Mention: Davey Boy Smith 57
Masa Saito 56, Bob Orton 51, Kuniaki Kobayashi 45, Isamu Teranishi 37

MM: "By who? The promotion? The public? Both? There are a dozen Jap prelim boys that are probably great and we'd never know. Dynamite and Davey Boy aren't underrated by those who know them or those who have seen them. I guess that's the problem. '85 should be a great year for them, Greg Gagne's comments aside. Blair is highly regarded although he's never done much for me. I'll pick Saito first, another year gone by, largely wasted with his awesome talent remaining held back. Dynamite second, especially since he's relatively short, many U.S. promoters seem to downgrade him. Correctly used he'll be a moneymaker. Strong Machine #2 is third. He's really exciting and I've only seen a teensy bit."

DM: "This is tough because to U.S. fans, all of the Japanese wrestlers plus Smith and Kid could qualify. However most promotions that they work for use them okay. Vince didn't use Smith and Kid well, but it's too much to expect that he would. I disagree about Blair although I think he's a very good wrestler. To the audience Titan is aiming for, those with no understanding of wrestling, a great wrestler will go over this heads anyway. Blair was used correctly, to give the top guys some tough matches. Same thing with Orton. Kernodle is No. 1, although that no longer seems to be the case. I went with Starr No. 2 and Masa Fuchi No. 3."

RD: "Kernodle tops the list every year. Adidas has lightning moves, good ability but is going nowhere. Samoan #3 would be a superstar if he left the Animal farm."

LL: "Kernodle, unless you've seen him in Mid Atlantic, Blair and Teranishi."

ND: "Both Arn Anderson and Eric Embry are very good but few people know it because of the areas they wrestle in. Teranishi third."

- 1980 - Hossein Arab (Iron Sheik)
- 1981 - Buzz Sawyer
- 1982 - Adrian Adonis
- 1983 - Dynamite Kid
- 1984 - Brian Blair

BEST CIRCUIT

- 1. NEW JAPAN PRO WRESTLING (66)...426
 - 2. All Japan Pro Wrestling (24)...289
 - 3. Mid South (26).....276
 - 4. Jarrett Promotions (11).....149
 - 5. Mid Atlantic (7).....72
- Honorable Mention: UWF 63, World Class 53

MM: "If it wasn't for a few critical gripes, I'd strongly consider the AWA. Shocked by the Hulk/Gena loss and several more embarrassing defections, I don't ignore the fact Verne somehow got the single best possible act (Brody). The destruction of Georgia freed up the Roadies, another big break. Still, I won't consider it. The best is, well at least was, Inoki's New Japan. Good American circuits are few and far in between. Where's George Cannon these days? I picked Memphis (Jarrett Promotions) second since they treat fans like they're human beings and Mid South third because they treat fans like they're ignorant rednecks, which is a solid step forward from what most promotions treat their fans like."

DM: "For the full year Inoki's New Japan was the best, even if the last three months weren't so great. I have to pick UWF second because the matches themselves are the hardest to be found anywhere. It's really a shame they won't last '85. I don't want to make it a clean sweep for Japan, because the angles worked in Mid South were really good, but I'm into good matches above good angles so I had to pick All Japan above them, if only slightly. I'd like to make note of Jarrett's group as well, who get more mileage out of their talent pool which is a mean trick in itself and the WWF, which gets no mileage out of theirs' (unless it's the mileage put in traveling around the country)."

LL: "New Japan and Mid South first two are no surprise. I went with Mid Atlantic third based on the entire year because they've had some excellent matches and build-ups, mainly involving Flair and Steamboat."
1983 - Mid Atlantic
1984 - New Japan Pro Wrestling

BEST TV SHOW

1. NEW JAPAN PRO WRESTLING (52)...356
 2. Mid South (36).....312
 3. Jarrett Promotions (24).....231
 4. All Japan Pro Wrestling (11)...171
 5. World Class (9).....151
- Honorable Mention: Portland 36

MM: "I wish I could better evaluate the Japanese shows but I only see clips and I don't get much out of the announcing and interviews. Stateside I've seen enough to consider the following on the basis of matches, technical proficiency, announcing and most important-- atmosphere. The best is the Memphis show (Jarrett) followed by Mid South and believe it or not, WWF Championship Wrestling taped in Poughkeepsie. It's as good as the Canadian show is bad. Special mention must be given to Tuesday Night Titans, wrestling's first and hopefully last "high concept" show. It often satisfies even my sick sense of humor. Surprisingly good is Verne Gagne's Canadian cable show all

due to the technical production of The Sports Network and none due to the AWA."

DM: "If there's one category I can fairly pick, this is it. If I had tapes from every circuit come in the mail on the same day, I would watch Mid South first. The hour goes by very quickly because the matches are fast-paced, the angles are the best, my intelligence is never insulted even if my political views are and Watts is such a strong commentator. I went with New Japan second based on all the good matches. Those are the only two shows I always watch in their entirety. I'm always excited about seeing the Jarrett show, but that's because I fast forward through the matches. Judging on comedy and interviews it would be No. 1. I occasionally skip a match for Baba's group, but watch 80 percent. I'll pick the Jarrett show third just by a hair. I never watch the AWA show anymore. The best individual TV shows of the year have been on the World Class show (Von Erich's death special, the two shows from Texas Stadium) however a very bad announcer combined with the same match-ups and those abhorrent girls and managers ruining the endings puts this show far lower in my estimation than last year. Mid Atlantic has the best squash matches but those angles are aimed at a two-year-old and only rarely hold up for adults. I can't even consider WWF. To me the whole atmosphere is obnoxious, from the bouts to the announcers to the skits. Piper and Albano are the only entertaining personalities, and even they get old because of lack of new material. How many Piper's pits end when the baby face makes a remark about him wearing a dress? Special mention must go to the Portland TV show, which has been locked in a time warp since 1962. The way wrestling is going, being 23 years behind the times should soon make it the best show on the air."

ND: "Memphis and Mid South are easily the best. I went with Memphis first because it's usually more entertaining and I would rather listen to Lance Russell than Bill Watts or Jim Ross."

1983 - New Japan Pro Wrestling
1984 - New Japan Pro Wrestling

MATCH OF THE YEAR

1. FREEBIRDS vs VON ERICHS
7/4 Ft. Worth Street Fight (22)...184
2. Slaughter vs Sheik
6/16 New York Boot Camp bout (19)...131
3. Flair vs. Kerry Von Erich
5/6 Texas Stadium (14).....99
4. Dynamite Kid vs. The Cobra
7/5 Tokyo (3).....90
5. Yoshiaki Yatsu vs Nobuhiko Takada
4/19 Tokyo (4).....80

Honorable Mention: Flair vs Steamboat 5/29 Meadowlands 65, Nobuhiko Takada vs Kazuo Yamazaki 12/5 Tokyo 63, Hulk Hogan vs Iron Sheik 1/23 New York 59, Davey Boy Smith-Dynamite Kid-David Shults vs Antonio Inoki-Fujinami-Cobra 7/13 Japan 56, Bruiser Brody vs Jerry Blackwell 10/21 St. Paul 53, Dynamite Kid vs Davey Boy Smith 7/20 Osaka 53, Super Tiger vs Akira Maeda 9/11 Tokyo 50, Ricky Steamboat vs Dick Slater early June Greenville 40, Flair vs Kerry Von Erich 5/24 Yokosuka, Japan 38, The Cobra vs Kuniaki Kobayashi 8/2 Tokyo 36

MM: "Live the best thing I saw was the 10/21 Lights out Match between Brody and Blackwell. On tape the best thing I saw was the jr. heavyweight title match between Dynamite Kid and Cobra. The one bout I would have most liked to have seen was the 9/11 Super Tiger vs Maeda match."
 DM: "Having said that Takada vs Yamazaki was the best live bout I've ever seen guarantees it the first spot. The 7/4 Bad Street bout between Freebirds and Von Erichs was the best U.S. match I saw because I didn't see any Flair vs Steamboat encounters except for brief clips which made me want to see it a lot. I picked that one third. Second place I went with the 6 man tag with Kid-Smith-Shults vs Inoki-Fujinami-Cobra. I'd like to mention in a different sense, the bout I'll remember the most was the Flair-Kerry title change at Texas Stadium for obvious reasons, although as a much it doesn't qualify among the best. The most surprisingly good match was the 4/19 Yatsu vs Takada match. I knew both guys were great, but they wrestled out of their league in that one."

RM: "Kid vs Smith first five minutes were great. Freebirds vs Von Erichs contained the most intense strapping I've seen and I picked Yatsu vs Takada third."
 RD: "The Hogan-Sheik title change was the most important because of its effect on wrestling. With Hulk as champ the WWF was more viable nationwide. The Flair-Kerry title change solidified the Von Erichs within the NWA while third goes to the Freebirds inagural match at Madison Square Garden. This helped convince the Birds they had no wrestling future in the group."
 Note: In the past two winners were picked, match you would have most liked to have seen and best match you saw.

1980 - Sammartino vs Zbyszko cage Shea Backlund vs. Patera MSG
 1981 - Rhodes vs Flair Kansas City Patterson vs Slaughter MSG
 1982 - Flair vs Backlund Atlanta Tiger Mask vs Dynamite Kid Tokyo
 1983 - Slaughter/Kernodle vs Steamboat/Youngblood Greensboro
 Flair vs Race Greensboro
 Freebirds vs Von Erichs Ft. Worth

CATEGORY B AWARDS

These are based on the number of first place votes received.

BEST WRESTLING MANEUVER

1. DYNAMITE KID/DAVEY BOY SMITH ONE ARM POWER CLEAN AND DROPKICK OFF THE TOP ROPES.....36
2. Tiger Mask's dive out of the ring, full flip and backward splash onto a foe.....33
3. Kuniaki Kobayashi's backward suplex with the guy on his shoulders off the middle ropes.....13
4. Tonga Kid's dive.....9
5. Jimmy Snuka's dive.....8

MM: "All the best, of course, is in Japan with Davey, Dynamite, New Tiger Mask and Cobra presenting their stunt I'll pick the Strong Machines and their finisher of one holding a foe with a fullnelson and the other coming off the top ropes with sort of a reverse leg lariat enzuigiri. Wild DM: "Tiger Mask's dive out of the ring doing the flip."

RM: "Dynamite Kid's belly-to-belly superplex."
 SM: "Two really stick out. The Kid/Smith double-team move is fabulous. It shows great ingenuity and some courage. The piledriver on the table by Randy Savage on Ricky Morton where the table broke was so good my only reaction was to laugh."

GZ: "When Cobra was on the middle ropes, Kobayashi stuck his head between his legs, climbed to the middle ropes and fell backwards with Cobra falling almost on his head."
 1981 - Snuka's dive off the ropes
 1982 - Super Destroyer's superplex
 1983 - Snuka's dive off the ropes
 1984 - Davey Boy Smith power clean followed by Dynamite Kid dropkick off the top rope

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

1. TOM ZENK.....11
 - KEIICHI YAMADA.....11
 3. Nikita Koloff.....10
 - Mike Von Erich.....10
- Note: Phil LaFleur, who received 42 votes for rookie of the year can't be listed because his began wrestling a few months prior to our cut-off point

MM: "Tom Zenk is a performer of great potential. His improvement has been noticable. He works and is willing to try difficult moves. Considering the AWA's poor handling of rookies, he's been very impressive
 DM: "Yamada is pretty small but appears to have great potential."
 LL: "A lean crop this year so I'll pick Gary Quartanelli. Even though he's doing jobs he has potential."

1980 - Barry Windham
 1981 - Brad Armstrong/Brad Rheingans
 1982 - Steve Williams
 1983 - Road Warriors
 1984 - Tom Zenk/Keiichi Yamada

HARDEST WORKER

1. RIC FLAIR.....80
2. Dynamite Kid.....40
3. Bruiser Brody.....7

MM: "I'll go with Dynamite Kid even though there are several deserving others toiling in Japan who I haven't seen enough of."

DM: "If you consider he wrestles long matches almost every night, his travel schedule and the quality of his work, Flair is in a class by himself. I can only recall one bad Flair match off-hand I've seen in the last year."

ND: "Flair's the most consistent wrestler in the business. I've seen him in several circuits against a number of wrestlers of different ability but he never gives less than 100 percent."

LL: "Dynamite Kid, very close over Flair."

1983 - Dynamite Kid

1984 - Ric Flair

BIGGEST SHOCK

1. DEATH OF DAVID VON ERICH.....115
2. McMahon purchasing GCW.....11
3. Bruno rejoining WWF.....9
4. Sheik beat Backlund.....7

MM: "This has been quite the year for shocks, most arising from Vince's expansion. The most amazing was his takeover of Georgia wrestling, eliminating his chief rival and getting cable TV's most visible wrestling show in one fell swoop. The upheavels of a year ago when Backlund lost the title with no warning and Vince plucking Hogan, Gene O and Piper was quite a stunner. Inoki's recent trouble was surprising but maybe it shouldn't have been, given the events of '83. Vince taking Calgary without a peep was a shock, albeit of lesser magnitude. However, for sheer importance, loss, sadness, waste and finality, the death of David Von Erich was a shock you hope you'll never hear the likes of again. I do appreciate Gordon Solie's brief mention of it the next day and the local Dallas media coverage."

DM: "There have been plenty of shocks this year, from the defections to some of the events of the wrestling war. The two biggest Vinnie-related shocks were the Iron Sheik's win over Backlund at the end of last year and his takeover of Georgia. However they all paled in comparison with the shock of David Von Erich dying."

SM: "Von Erich's death was a sad and tragic thing, I must go with the Brisco brothers selling their shares of Georgia wrestling to Vince McMahon. This one came from left field and surprised me so much."

1981 - Tommy Rich winning NWA title

1982 - Otto Wanz winning AWA title

1983 - Harley Race winning NWA title

1984 - Death of David Von Erich

MOST DISGUSTING PROMOTIONAL TACTIC

1. BLACKJACK MULLIGAN'S FAKE HEART CONDITION AND HEART ATTACK.....36
2. Cyndi Lauper and David Wolfe's involvement in wrestling.....21
3. Kevin Sullivan's usage of knives to the heart.....14
4. Stripper cage matches with the girls in Southwest.....13
5. The entire Mulligan-Sullivan feud.....12

MM: "What a rich category. There's too many to pick from. In Dallas, how about promoting Stella Mae and Mike Von Erich. How about the "win one for David" stuff. In Mid Atlantic, how about the \$1 million Starcade. Florida has Kevin Sullivan's satanism and Blackjack Mulligan's heart-attack. Just about everything in the WWF qualifies--the exultation of Sgt. Slaughter to his personal embarrassment. The selling of Brutus Beefcake. All sickening, dumb and disgusting, but that's what wrestling is all about. Two things bothered me even more. I won't pick on Vinnie's expansion strategy or his trying to take over wrestling, but his planned overexposure is troublesome. It's obvious he's more concerned in hurting opposition than helping himself. He must feel overexposure will cause a shakeout and several promotions will fail because of it. Since all wrestling is perceived as the same by TV people and building managers, the media, the public at large, just about everyone who isn't a fan, he figures he'll be left to pick up the pieces. But even worse is the increased trend in advertising wrestlers who aren't booked and won't appear. Vince? No, his no-shows result from logistical incompetence. The worst seems to be AWA mat messiah Big Daddy Verne Gag-me. Starting with last December and all the Hogan no-shows, he's picked his spots to deserve an award. By George, he hasn't had honesty or integrity in the last 25 minutes."

DM: "I don't know where to start. All I know is next year this one moves to Category A (three picks). I would say nothing is worse than WWF's blatant lying in advertising, locally billing Jesse Ventura four weeks after he went to the hospital for a main event match. I would say that, except hangman's noose matches and phony heart attacks prevailed in Florida. I just wonder if Vince can top that in '85."

LL: "A close race between WWF and Florida but a fake heart attack gives Florida the edge."

RD: "Florida's antics of heart attacks and hangings go beyond Vince's bad taste."

RM: "Bob Armstrong's legitimate non-wrestling injury, a serious one at that, being used by Ole Anderson to sell tickets."

ND: "Forget all the idiotic things in Florida, the million or so mistakes by Ole Anderson in Georgia or even Vince's travelling sideshow. The worst thing was Fritz Von Erich using the wrestling war as a way to get the NWA belt for his son Kerry."

SM: "Using Cyndi Lauper to sell tickets to a wrestling card. I have never been more incensed, sick or felt used by a promotion than by any other gimmick in history."
 1981 - Usage of "The Monster" in L.A.
 1982 - Backlund as WWF champion
 1983 - Pretending Eddie Gilbert had re-injured his neck after a serious car accident injured him in the first place
 1984 - Blackjack Mulligan's phony heart attack in Florida

BEST ANNOUNCER

1. LANCE RUSSELL.....70
2. Bill Watts.....23
3. Gordon Solie.....12
4. Mr. Furutachi.....10
5. Gene Okerlund.....8

MM: "A very short list. I didn't hear anyone better than Lance Russell in Memphis. Watts is a lot of fun but he can come on too strong and I didn't hear him that much. Bruno can be an excellent color man and adds a lot to Vince's circus. Most everyone else ranges from awful to worse. Gene Okerlund is fun doing interviews but he's horrible at play-by-play."

DM: "Can't accurately gauge the Japanese announcer, but of the rest, the only good ones are Lance and Dave Brown in Memphis, Watts and Jim Ross in Mid South and Don Koss in Portland. Bob Baudile in the Carolinas is average, which ranks him near the top. I enjoy Russell the most, but I still went with Watts because I think he's the most effective at getting his angles over. I should give Larry Nelson (AWA) credit as the best rookie announcer and Mark Lowrance (Ft. Worth) credit as the most improved."

- 1981 - Gordon Solie
- 1982 - Gordon Solie
- 1983 - Gordon Solie
- 1984 - Lance Russell

BEST MANAGER

1. JIMMY HART.....84
2. Lou Albano.....25
3. Jim Cornette.....18

MM: "I considered three, Bobby Heenan, who needed a change of scenery, got it, and is doing great. He may be tough to top next year. I have a soft spot for Ichimasa Wakamatsu, the wildman manager of the Strong Machines. He sure looks the coolest but I can't compare him to 84's best manager, Jimmy Hart the Mondo Maniac. Hart conveys humor, excitement and fun from the "Southern Handicap Championship" to his bodyguard "Jimmy Jr."

DM: "Jimmy Hart makes the Memphis TV show. I don't know of anyone more valuable to a market. Lou Albano is always funny, especially during the Lauper build-up, and Cornette was in my opinion the best during the spring. Every time you see Hart you enjoy him more, while Cornette has become stale to me."

ND: "I wouldn't disagree with anyone who picked Cornette, but I'll still go with Hart was the best."

JH: "Who is the greatest manager in professional wrestling and why am I?"

- 1983 - Jimmy Hart
- 1984 - Jimmy Hart

READERS FAVORITE WRESTLER

1. RIC FLAIR.....41
2. Dynamite Kid.....36
3. Bruiser Brody.....25
4. Roddy Piper.....7
- Super Tiger.....7

READERS MOST HATED WRESTLER

1. IVAN PUTSKI.....35
2. Andre the Giant.....19
3. Junkyard Dog.....15
4. Kimala.....12
5. Dusty Rhodes.....11
- Bob Backlund.....11
- Hulk Hogan.....11

MM: "The ones that qualify I just don't watch. Life's too short to waste it watching Rufus Jones."

SM: "There are a lot to choose from, but I cringe every time I see Rufus Jones. I've been cringing for many years now. He's been bad since I was a kid. He has no skill. He doesn't care what he looks like. He's only done three moves his entire career, headlock, head-butt and shoulderblock. He's the single best example of racial stereotyping in the world."

ND: "Bob Backlund is the most boring wrestler in the world, bar none."

WORST WRESTLER

1. IVAN PUTSKI.....34
2. Kimala.....27
3. The Crusher.....14
4. Jay Strongbow.....13
- Junkyard Dog.....13
- Rufus Jones.....13

MM: "This year's biggest in ring abomination goes to once-great Reggie "Crusher" Lisowski. Only because they insisted on putting him over in so many main events do I pick on him. Following closely is Rufus Jones and that exacerable little goon Ivan Putski."

DM: "The old guys are really bad but it isn't their fault. Ox Baker is horrible but it's not his fault. Junkyard Dog was decent a few years ago and he isn't all that old. I'd rather pick on him."

WORST TAG TEAM

1. CRUSHER & BARON VON RASCHKE...84
2. Ron Garvin & Jerry Oates.....13
3. The Samoans.....11
4. Rocky Johnson & Tony Atlas.....7
5. King Parsons & Buck Zumhofe....6

MM: "Easy. Can anyone believe Crusher & Baron held a "World" tag title. That alone ranks as a new promotional low. I'm getting sick thinking about it."

LL: "More teams than usual this year. The Samoans are my pick over such unworthy's as the Zambuie Express, Crusher & Baron, Fuji & Chung Lee and Dick the Bruiser & Jeff Van Camp."

RM: "I didn't even have to see these guys (Crusher & Baron) to know they were the worst."

VS: "Let's hope there will never be a worse set of tag champs than Crusher & Baron."

WORST TV SHOW

1. WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION...67
2. American Wrestling Association.23
3. Tuesday Night Titans.....21
4. The Best of Ole Anderson.....17
5. Southwest.....9
- World Wrestling Association....9
- Tomko Vancouver.....9

MM: "You hate to kick a guy when he's down, but Ole Anderson should get a lifetime achievement award for what he's done to the once great Atlanta show. WWFs All-Star Wrestling is terrible. Other bad shows I didn't watch."

DM: "Some shows repulsed me so I didn't watch them. Others bored me so I quit. WWA is so bad it's funny so I sure can't pick that. I'd have to pick Ole Anderson's Sat a.m. show. Right now I've begun watching it via tape, only to fast-forward through everything but Jimmy Hart interviews."

LL: "Tuesday Night Titans makes all other wrestling shows look like Masterpiece Theater."

SM: "I'm not going to pick on a little independent group and while it's tempting to pick the AWA, I will instead go with Tuesday Night Titans. All this show succeeds in doing is make a joke out of wrestling. If the buffoon who runs the show and his sidekick should poke fun at anything, it's only themselves. In six months the only thing worth watching was when Piper slapped the Lord and made the crack about wearing a kilt because slacks "cramp" him."

ND: "Although I'm tempted to pick the WWF, Vinnie has a better TV show than Verne Gagne."

RD: "The AWA is the worst. At least the ads on Vince's shows allow you to buy \$249 worth of jewelry for \$19.95."

VS: "The Blanchard/Boyd circus should be a shoo-in. Some shows are more boring or have worse announcers but the guys bleeding on every interview and the same garbage every week is all I can take."

I'd hate to see a show worse than this."

GZ: "If it has to do with angles, WPIX would be the worst. Maple Leaf Wrestling is in the same boat, but I picked Al Tomko's Vancouver show the worst, even though it does have angles. The wrestlers aren't to hot, though."

WORST MANAGER

1. MR. FUJI.....67
2. Johnny Valiant.....21
3. Tojo Yamamoto.....11
4. Scandor Akbar.....9
5. Paul Jones.....8

MM: "As the top manager in a promotion, nobody was more worthless than Akbar in Dallas. Can you believe they got Jimmy Cornette in a trade for him. That's the crime of the year in Mid South."

DM: "What is Fuji's purpose? Valiant is the most obnoxious, but he's been that way for a while."

SM: "Paul Jones, not only can't he do a decent interview but his wrestlers like Assassin #1 are usually much better."

ND: "I wouldn't argue with anyone who chose Sheik Kaisey or Akbar, but Jones is even worse. It's just a shame Gene Anderson is no longer a manager."

WORST ANNOUNCER

1. ANGELO MOSCA.....51
 2. Gorilla Monsoon.....26
 3. Jack Reynolds.....22
 4. Rod Tronguard.....15
 5. Gordon Solie.....13
- Honorable Mention: Lord Al Hayes 12, Vince McMahon 9

MM: "A toss up between Tronguard and Solie. Since Gordon can be good and perhaps once even was, we'll go with Rod whom there was never any hope."

DM: "For four years I've been waiting to pick Solie and now he's not even close. Monsoon is the most obnoxious but Dave McLain is a bigger joke than Vince's wedding show. Sam Menacker is still the most boring. However the most inept is Mosca, who gets my vote."

ND: "Tronguard is to wrestling what Howard Cosell is to football."

LL: "Monsoon is the most pompous since he's got aspirations of being wrestling's Cosell. With a "tell it like it is" approach a\$ witness his "gimme a break Mr. referee" catch phrase. It's as if he instantly expects old Gil Roman to suddenly transform into a collegiate style ref. Though Roman is his prize whipping boy, no ref is safe from Monsoon except Joe Marella, described by Gene Okerlund as "a law and order ref."

SM: "Gordon Solie. I would love to give him a deep...deep...double underhook suplayyy the next time he says..."A game of human chess at it's finest."

WORST MATCH

1. MOOLAH VS RICHTER.....19
2. Andre vs Studd.....18
3. Martel vs Tsuruta (title change in St. Paul).....10
4. Road Warriors vs Crusher & Baron.....10
5. Stella Mae vs Nicola Roberts...8

MM: "Anything remotely bad on video gets the fast scan treatment. The worst live encounter I saw was the first Road Warriors vs Crusher & Baron match. The hopeless ones were still champs. I hesitate to call any match with Crusher "live."

DM: "I could list a million but those which come to mind as being worse then bearable are Putski vs Studd at the WWFs inaugural St. Louis show, Samoans vs Fuji & Chung Lee Spectrum battle of the nerve holds, Snuka vs Paul Orndorff in Oakland (worst live bout slightly over Putski vs Ventura mainly because my back was to the ring during the latter match), and as the worst payoff from the biggest hype, the Moolah-Richter MTV circus. Still I went with the Thanksgiving Stella Mae vs Nicola Roberts match.

Both the AWA title change matches deserve mention for poor performances by generally good wrestlers."

SM: "The Ox Baker vs MEB match in Kansas City comes to mind, but I'll go with Moolah-Richter because the bout was given the biggest build-up I've ever seen. It had two girls with experience (Richter is a good wrestler in good shape, Moolah isn't in shape but has been wrestling so long she should at least know what to do), and add in an experienced slob like Albano and you should have a good show. Nope."

LL: "I'll vote for Kimala vs Kabuki at 5/6 Texas Stadium mainly because I can't single out any one bad WWF match. The worst tag match was 6/7 Spectrum with Fuji & Chung Lee vs Samoans."

WORST FEUD

1. ANDRE THE GIANT VS JOHN STUDD...55
2. Jake Roberts vs Ronnie Garvin...31
3. Mr. Fuji vs Tiger Chung Lee.....11
4. Tommy Rich vs Eddie Gilbert.....7
5. Hulk Hogan vs John Studd.....6

MM: "When Ole Anderson resurrected his "Championship Wrestling from Georgia" from the smoldering ashes of "Georgie Championship Wrestling" what was the main event on his first live card. Ron Garvin vs Jake Roberts for the umpteenth time. Not even promotional self destruction could save us from this. Horrible in too many ways to elucidate."

DM: "Andre and Studd was tiresome and heaven knows the bouts were bad, but the thing can and did draw. Roberts vs Garvin had a lot more going for it, two boring wrestlers doing the same interview week after week, a feud which never ended, never drew and bad matches. What more can one ask for?"

ND: "There's no worse torture than watching Andre and Studd 'wrestle.'" RD: "Sometimes I dream I've died and gone to hell, I turn on the TV and I'm watching Andre and Studd wrestle for 24 minutes."

SM: "The Garvin/Sunshine/Adams/Stella Mae/Gino/Andre/Sunshine feud. This was bad from the start. The valet idea was great but the way it was handled, changed and resurrected was horrible. It destroyed one fairly good wrestler (Garvin), hurt another (Adams), and is hurting one more (Hernandez, but he was bad anyway)."

WORST ON INTERVIEWS

1. JIMMY SNUKA.....21
2. Thunderbolt Patterson.....18
3. Bob Backlund.....17
4. Kerry Von Erich.....13
5. Andre the Giant.....6
- Mike Von Erich.....6

MM: "Considering his importance as a draw, no one is as hopeless as Kerry Von Erich."

DM: "I'm not sure which is worse, opening your mouth and proving you are ignorant (Snuka) or inability to even get some words out (Mike Von Erich and Thunderbolt Patterson). I went with Snuka."

ND: "I've never heard anyone as bad on interviews as Mike Von Erich. But it's no wonder when you realize he learned from Kevin and Kerry."



WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

WWF HC - Hulk Hogan

Intercontinental HC - Greg Valentine

WWF TTC - Adrian Adonis & Dick Murdoch

Two big items of concern here. The first is the Cyndi Lauper/Lou Albano/Roddy Piper incident which took place 12/28 at Madison Square Garden. Actually as I write this, the MSG card hasn't taken place but some things aren't hard to figure.

The other major item involves Sgt. Slaughter. Slaughter wanted to re-negotiate his deal with Vince, possibly to get a share (or a larger share) of the cobra corps souvenir fund. Anyway, Vince dismissed Sarge, who then went to re-up with his former captains Jim Crockett and Verne Gagne. From what I'm told, Sarge and Crockett were unable to cut a deal, and by Virgil, I can't figure out why. Actually I can.

The latest reports coming my way are that Slaughter may make a deal with Gagne, or he'll possibly be returning to the W.W.F. after all. Slaughter hasn't appeared on any shows since the first week of December and naturally left a slew of no-shows in his wake. The Slaughter-Titan confrontation probably took place on or around 12/9, because a show was held that afternoon in Toronto and Slaughter was seen at the building. However Hulk Hogan (not booked on the card) replaced Sarge in his match against Niccoli Volkoff. For WWF to have gotten Hulk into town that day, they must have known in advance that Slaughter was unavailable for combat, or would be if by chance he was fired that day.

Actually Christmas week was mighty fine for the WWF. The Atlanta show on the 25th drew about 5,500 fans, which is the best crowd they've had since the debut show. The Thanksgiving card with the Turkey Battle Royal (which was a flop in most every city), drew only 4,800 as compared with Ole Anderson's show a few days earlier which drew 7,000. The St. Louis show on 12/27 drew 9,490 as per newspaper report and a ringside view said that number looked very accurate (almost too accurate). Tickets at Madison Square Garden were a hot commodity and the second straight sellout was expected. The same night saw Titan's Texas Tour begin with a crowd of 2,800 at the Summit in Houston as compared with Bill Watts' crowd of 10,000 at the Houston Coliseum that same night. They return to Oklahoma City, where they debuted drawing 1,500 fans and an \$11,000 gate on 11/29 opposite Watts' free show which drew 10,000 turning several thousand more away, many of whom were in a wrestling mood and went over to the WWF show. Actually Watts' show was more of an autograph party with several of the leading baby faces on his circuit such as Jim Duggan, the Rock'n'Roll Express and Kerry Von Erich.

Running down some of the major cards, the 11/26 Madison Square Garden show which was the first sellout (honest to goodness) since June of 22,000 saw: 1. S.D. Jones pinned Charlie Fulton in 10:00 * $\frac{1}{4}$; 2. Moondog Spot pinned Jose Luis Rivera in 10:00 after a clothesline off the middle ropes. Spot tried to make it good but Jose was a liability as usual. *; 3. Bobby Heenan pinned Sal Bellomo in 9:00 with a punch to the face when Sal tried a roll-up. Heenan was supposed to use the ropes for the pin and get a fast count. Little did he realize the count was so fast he couldn't even grab the ropes for leverage in time. *; 4. Angelo Mosca downed Mr. Fuji via DQ when Fuji threw salt in his eyes at 8:00 when caught in a sleeper. DUD (thank goodness it was that good); 5. Bob Orton pinned Swede Hanson in 9:00 with the flying body smash move that AWA fans will recall Buck Zumhofe using. Orton does the move even slower than Buck. It's unfair to rate Orton's prowess in this match. The commentators (Monsoon and Hayes if I recall) compared Hanson to a wall. Actually a wall isn't quite as smart although a wall does have more agility than the Swede; 6. Tonga Kid DDQ Roddy Piper in 7:00 ending when Rod punched Snuka who was outside the ring, Orton jumped out of the ring and a four man brawl ensued. Bout had tons of heat. Piper put on a good performance. Tonga really moves well considering his lack of experience. He doesn't know any moves yet unfortunately except the dive, which he didn't do. *** $\frac{1}{4}$; 7. Barry Windham pinned Moondog Rex in 12:00 with a bulldog headlock. Hayes commented that the MSG fans know wrestling as well as the wrestlers. I assume he meant the WWF wrestlers, in which case he may be right. This match was good. ***; 8. Tony Atlas pinned The Executioner (our man Friday who has since jumped to be with Kimala again) in 2:00 with a press-slam. DUD (by the way Orton's match was a dud as well); 9. Dave Shults pinned Rocky Johnson in 9:00 with a roll-up although the ref called for the bell after counting two. Just as well, anything to end this catastrophe. You can burn up more calories sipping coffee than Shults does when he's in the ring. -*** (that's negative three stars); 10. Dave Sammartino downed Ken Patera via DQ in 13:00. During the bout Dave did an impressive press on Patera, who goes a legit 260 these days. Albano tripped Dave to cause the DQ, and Bruno was at ringside and got a blow or two in on Albano. Should mention Dave came off the ropes a minute earlier and went down for no reason, as this was when Albano was supposed to trip him. Louis is funny as hell, but he misses his cues and is dangerous to be around. ***; 11. Tito Santana and Greg Valentine drew over 24:00 in an Intercontinental title match which contained a decent amount of action and a decent amount of resting blended together to be a perfectly average match. ** $\frac{1}{2}$

Titan drew 8,603 on 11/25 in Los Angeles and 11,220 the next night in Oakland with these results: Mascaras pinned Toru Tanaka, Bret Hart drew Spoiler (Bret is the favorite to win the 1985 Brian Blair award for Titan's fourth best wrestler and most wasted talent), Mike Rotundo pinned Goulet (bout was the best one on both shows), Blackjack Mulligan pinned Alexis Smirnoff (things like this make me glad I stayed home), Jack & Jerry Brisco over Jon Valiant & Brutus Beefcake, A bloody Mulligan won the 18 or so man Battle Royal (they changed the number each week on the pro-mos) throwing out Studd who they billed as last year's winner despite the fact he wasn't, to win \$50,000, Buddy Rose pinned Rick McGraw and Sgt. Slaughter & Junkyard Dog beat Iron Sheik & Niccoli Volkoff when Sarge pinned Sheik. I was told the L.A. card wasn't bad but the S.F. area show definitely was.

12/8 in Boston drew a sellout of 16,000 (in fact it sold out two days early) as Snuka-Tonga Kid over Piper-Orndorff when Paul got pinned, a girls tag and my dream match, Studd pinned Swede Hanson. The only other non-prelim saw Dave Sammartino beating Patera-DQ in a bout which saw Dave need 45 stitches after Albano "lost it" and began carving up his own forehead with an Xacto knife. Both Dave and Patera tried to get him to stop and as they rolled around, the knife went into Dave's arm and chopped it to ribbons. Yeech! He missed several matches because of the injury. I must say this shows without any doubt that Piper and Snuka are the big draws these days. I'm told the 1/5 show won't sell out with Valentine vs. Tito and Patera-Studd vs. Andre-JYD.

The 11/18 Toronto show drew 10,257 as Piper DDQ Tonga when Snuka and Orndorff interfered and Tito DCOR Valentine. Two of the prelims saw Fuji pin Strongbow and Mulligan pin Steele, while Orndorff was wasted in a 4:00 bout with Nick DeCarlo. The TV tapings done in Hamilton the next night drew 780, but the most recent London tapings on 12/16 drew 2,500. No-shows that night in London included Piper, Atlas, Studd and Slaughter. They're back in Hamilton for tapings 1/6. The 12/9 Toronto show saw Hulk pin Volkoff, Santana over Valentine-COR and Mosca beat Sheik in a death match. I believe that show drew nearly 10,000 as well. They return 12/30 with Patear-Studd vs Andre-Mulligan.

Rocky Johnson has departed, as has been expected for some time. He was advertised for several shows after he left, which is also as expected. Jesse Ventura has returned. The Samoans haven't appeared on any cards in about five weeks, however they are at least on working terms with Titan since they appeared in the TV wedding of Paul Vachon farce. George Welles also debuted on 12/9 Toronto pinning Bobby Bass. Welles wasn't a theft from Watts. In fact Watts had Welles lose several TV matches before his departure. Contrary to popular belief, the only reason Kimala left was because he was tired of traveling so extensively. It was known Kimala would be leaving which is why he took all those surprising pins against Andre his last week. Buddy Rose is also back in, but has already lost to many foes including Tiger Conway in Houston and Dallas.

The 12/1 Spectrum show drew 13,567 as Orton drew Rotundo, Piper DDQ Tonga, JYD beat Beefcake-DQ, Slaughter DDQ Volkoff and Windham pinned Rose. 1/12 is Andre-JYD vs Patera-Studd and Snuka vs Orton. JYD has turned into a tremendous draw in Philly, home of the fans who pelt the ring with more garbage than any fans in the world.

12/7 in Pittsburgh drew 6,000 as Sammartino over Beefcake-DQ, Snuka-Tonga DDQ Piper-Orndorff.

A few other notes. I'm sure everyone who cares about the Jim Morris scenario knows about it so I won't waste space writing the details. They held a 23 match card in Hartford, CT on 11/23 not even for tapings. They had promised one of those brilliant idea cage Battle Royals, but when fans got there they found out the state athletic commission wouldn't allow the idea so instead they had 19 (you got it right) cage matches, all of which were very short and ended with either walk outs the door or in two cases over-the-tops. Major results included Valentine over Mosca, Atlas over Valentine, Atlas over Orton, Shults over Atlas, Santana over Shults, Patera over Santana, Patera over Sammartino, Strongbow over Patera (yesiree), Studd over Strongbow (a classic) and the final bout saw Studd win the whole thing beating Johnson.

The two most recent shows in Columbus, Ohio drew 3,500 and 3,000 while Ole's first show there (11/24) in several months drew 2,500 and included a World title match as Tommy Rich beat Flair-COR.

Several cities have seen Santana-Valentine 60:00 draws which last anywhere from 37 to 50 minutes. Buddy Rose goes to trial on the tax evasion charge 1/27.

Hulk Hogan took some time off when he was supposed to be touring Japan (11/17 to 12/9) to rest his injured knee. Windham/Rotundo will feud with Sheik/Volkoff shortly. With Adonis/Murdoch due for a title loss soon, I gather Windham/Rotundo should get it since it seems the Briscos don't want to wrestle full-time.

The 12/10 Meadowlands drew 7,000 with Snuka DCOR Orton, JYD over Orndorff and Hulk beat Studd-COR. They have a tag team Battle Royal on 1/6 and I'm told will have tag royals in several other cities as well.

The 11/28 St. Louis show drew 5,982 as Snuka won a Battle Royal, Orndorff beat Tonga Kid who was DQ'd for coming off the top ropes, Volkoff beat Vachon-DQ (too bad they didn't tape it and put it in a time capsule), Mulligan DCOR Studd and Piper over JYD-COR. The 12/27 show drew 9,490 as Hulk pinned Beefcake, Dog over Piper-DQ with Orton and Snuka getting involved, Snuka pinned Orton in a good match, Hart drew Jon Valiant and Adonis-Murdoch over Briscos when Dickie hit Jerry with a chair in what I was told was an excellent match. Actually I was told the card as a whole was pretty good. The 11/29 Kansas City show, which went head-to-head with an NWA show (Flair vs Blackwell) was outdrawn 2,200 to 800. Main results saw Rotundo drew Orton, Santana over Valentine-COR, Mulligan over Studd, Piper over Putski.

The Oklahoma City debut on 11/29 before 1,500 saw Rose DCOR Hart, Slaughter over Sheik-COR, JYD over Orndorff-DQ.

Les Thornton and Mr. Wrestling II continue to appear only in Southern cities and have yet to appear on TV matches. Thornton did make an appearance with Freddy Miller in the WTBS studio and called himself the World's jr. heavyweight champion holding the old belt he "won in the Philippines" when he worked for Ole Anderson. Anyway, on 12/28 at the Garden, Cobra will win the World's jr. heavyweight belt pinning Black Tiger if everything goes to plan. So now we have two World jr. champs in the WWF. I'm sure Norm Keitzer will pick up that info for his mag.

The first Calgary area tour saw WWF draw below expectations in about half the cities and draw about what they expected in the other half. The 11/5 Vancouver show drew the best crowd, maybe 4,000 (about what Stu Hart had averaged) as Andre beat Kimala, Bret Hart beat Ron Shaw, Dynamite Kid beat Bobby Bass, Adonis-Murdoch over Samoans-COR, Sheik over Mosca-DQ, Jerry Morrow drew Ben Bassarab and Davey Boy Smith over Goulet.

A late note is that the Dallas debut for Titan drew 2,500 (\$22,000) as compared to Fritz Von Erich's 4,000 the same night on 12/28. Reports are the crowd was for the most part those who don't attend World Class shows, it was a new and rowdier audience. The card was poor, but not much worse than many of the recent Dallas shows and the crowd did enjoy it, especially Santana over Valentine-DQ in a very good match. Johnny Valentine was there watching his son by the way. 100-year-old midget Sky LoLo lost to the Haiti Kid while the main saw Andre-Mulligan over Patera-Heenan (Studd was a no-show, as was Wendy Richter, Tonga Kid (I wonder where he was on 12/28) and Don Muraco). They should do better 1/17 Hulk vs Sheik, Tito vs Greg.

The MSG show the same night drew 26,000 which is an MSG sellout plus a closed circuit sellout at the Felt Forum as Hulk pinned Sheik in what I was told was a 6:00 boring match, Snuka-Tonga DDQ Piper-Orton in what was exciting and the best bout was supposedly Cobra pinning Black Tiger, and it went over well. I was told this was the equivalent of one of their Japan matches, and if so, it must have been darn good.

After Tito and Greg go to their 60 minute draws, they return with 90 minute time limits.

TV Guide ran a short item mentioning that wrestling will soon be on Sports World. It indeed will be Titan wrestling. According to an NBC source, wrestling will not be a weekly thing nor are there any plans for such. He called it very unlikely Titan will get a weekly network show and he couldn't see it happening. However, there are people at NBC who are hot for wrestling at the present time.

Bob Backlund's Northeast Wrestling Federation continues to draw less than 500 per show in Springfield, Mass. One show which saw Bob DDQ Billy Graham saw the TV program which promo's the Sunday p.m. card (normally shown Sunday at midnight) switched to earlier that day thus an interview with Bob talking about their match "earlier tonight" was shown before the match with the result given away. Carlos Colon also appears on this group's cards.

PRO WRESTLING USA

The latest venue for TV tapings of this show was Las Vegas. I've yet to see a tape, but aside from Kimala, all the talent is from the AWA. They did work an angle, a six man tag elimination match which saw Jim Brunzell and Luke Graham as the last two and Luke pinned Jim thanks to help from Sheik Kaisey. They were matched in singles the next week with Jim winning and then getting attacked afterwards by The Superstar.

The first (and I'm told the last as well) Meadowlands show takes place 2/24. I don't know any of the matches although they hint at Flair vs Martel. It's still unknown whether Jim Crockett and Verne Gagne can remain on working terms for another six weeks to put that match together.

In other Northeastern news, the NWA (Ole Anderson) had a show set for 12/30 in Pittsburgh however the building was suddenly pulled from him at the last minute. Any guesses why? The Crocketts have a show tentatively scheduled for 2/5 in Philadelphia but I don't count on any of these shows taking place. They also have a 1/23 show at the Ridgewood Grove Arena in Queens, the same night as Madison Square Garden.

ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING

International HC - Jumbo Tsuruta
Pacific Federation HC - Giant Baba
United National HC - Genichiro Tenryu
International jr. HC - Mighty Inoue
PWF World TTC - Stan Hansen & Bruiser Brody
International TTC - Jumbo Tsuruta & Genichiro Tenryu

As reported earlier, Tsuruta & Tenryu downed Hansen & Brody via DQ on 12/12 Yokohama to win the annual tag team tournament. The Hansen/Brody, Funks and Harley Race/Nick Bockwinkel team all tied for second place with 10 points, one behind the winners. Dynamite Kid & Davey Boy Smith placed fifth with seven points, while Giant Baba & Rusher Kimura tied with One Man Gang & Goro Tsurumi for sixth with two points. Tiger Jeet Singh & Mike Shaw placed last with no points. I should mention that in all the round robin matches involving the top five teams, only one pin was scored, that on 12/5 in Kumamoto when Hansen-Brody downed Kid-Smith when Stan lariatated Smith. The bout wasn't as good as expected I'm told because it was one-sided in favor of Hansen-Brody.

The meeting reported upon last issue between Vince McMahon and Giant Baba on 11/16 was mainly concerning the jumping of Dynamite Kid and Davey Boy Smith to this promotion. The meeting was arranged by Seiji Sakaguchi (New Japan booker) who is trying to arrange an out-of-court settlement since Kid and Smith are under contract with New Japan until January 1, 1986. Aside from what we reported on last time, Kid and Smith were also displeased with their pay at New Japan, especially when compared to the "WWF blockheads" (whatever that is supposed to mean). Supposedly at New Japan they were getting paid between \$1,500-\$2,000 weekly, while at All Japan Smith will earn \$2,500 weekly and Kid \$3,500. They may be disappointed again shortly because the Road Warriors are coming in March and both Roadies and Paul Ellering will earn \$10,000 apiece for the week stay.

Atsushi Onita, a very good wrestler who was International jr. champ before breaking his kneecap in a match with Hector Guerrero in April '83 announced his retirement 12/2 at the age of 27. Onita returned to action for this group a few months ago, but wasn't the same and his knee couldn't take the pressure wrestling nightly provides. He announced prior to his match that night he'd retire if he couldn't win the Int. jr. title from current champ Mighty Inoue at Korauken Hall. Surprisingly Inoue pinned him in 14:56 and Onita had to bid wrestling farewell in a teary-eyed ceremony. Buzz Sawyer was supposed to appear as One Man Gang's partner in the tourney but Buzz lost his passport thus never made it into Japan. Gang originally chose Pirata Morgan as his partner, however in a non-league match on the first night of the series, 11/22 in Matsudo, Gang & Morgan lost to Giant Baba & Rusher Kimura in a match where Morgan was never on offense and was pinned. Morgan (180 pounds) also holds the dubious distinction as the first wrestler I've ever seen bodyslammed by Baba. Morgan had to do it all himself, but still it was accomplished. After the bout Gang replaced Morgan with Goro Tsurumi, an aggressive Japanese heel type as his partner.

The 11/23 Tokyo show saw what I was told was the best bout of the tourney except for the 12/8 Nagoya Funks vs Brody-Hansen match; with Kid-Smith losing via count out to the Funks in 23:23. Among the moves done were the diving head-butt by Kid onto Terry, leaping off Dory's back as Dory was airplane spinned by Smith and there was plenty of brawling and chair throwing.

I should mention that Kid-Smith will be starting up a promotion in Western Canada in late February. Undoubtedly most of the former Stampede Wrestling stars will work for this group which will be in competition with the WWF and also with the AWA shortly and Al Tomko's group.

Of the 11 shows I had reported to me in the recent tour, nine were sellouts. The next All Japan series takes place 1/2 until 2/5 with a four promotion group war. Giant Baba and his normal crew of Tsuruta, Tenryu, Ishikawa, Inoue, Fuchi, etc. will be joined by N.W.A. World Middleweight champion El Gran Hamada and Kabuki to form one group. The foreign group consists of Kid, Smith, Pero Aguayo, Brazo de Oro and Brazo de Plata. These five will probably work a lot with Tiger Mask and the jr. heavies since Tsuruta/Tenryu in the main events will be kept busy with the two other groups. The third group will be the IWE army which includes Rusher Kimura, Ryuma Go, Goro Tsurumi, Tiger Jeet Singh and Nuboyashi Sugawara. The fourth group will be the stars of Riki Productions--Riki Choshu, Animal Hamaguchi, Yoshiaki Yatsu, Isamu Teranishi, Kuniaki Kobayashi and they'll be joined by Masa Saito and Killer Khan. In addition, Shunji Takano, younger brother to The Cobra has recently joined Riki's group.

Choshu and company ran live shows 12/4 in Takamatsu drawing a full house of 3,500 as Choshu pinned Masked X in 1:35 with a lariat. The masked man wore a Strong Machine-type outfit and was Masa Fuchi of All Japan. They also ran a show 12/13 in Tokyo as reported upon earlier.

UNIVERSAL WRESTLING FEDERATION

The big show on 12/5 Tokyo was already reported upon. Of the ten shows reported to me this past series, five were sellouts although the largest crowd for any of the shows was only 3,700 12/4 Hamamatsu as Super Tiger & Yoshiaki Fujiwara downed Scott McGhee & Pete Roberts in 24:01 when Fujiwara made McGhee submit.

Of the foreign wrestlers it was Roberts who fared the best, scoring pins on Keith Hayward and Kazuo Yamazaki. Hayward also beat Yamazaki and in three bouts with Nobuhiko Takada, had a win, a loss and a draw. Hayward did lose against Fujiwara and Akira Maeda. McGhee also beat Yamazaki, but lost when matched with Fujiwara, Maeda, Takada and Super Tiger.

At the 12/5 Tokyo show Maeda issued a challenge for New Japan's ace Tatsumi Fujinami to meet him on 12/26 in Tokyo but of course it was a grandstand challenge.

The group held special shows 12/26 and 12/28 in Tokyo's Korauken Hall, with both shows selling out two weeks in advance. Super Tiger will unmask and wrestle as Satoru Sayama starting that show. In addition they will also have main event matches without ropes on one of the cards. They don't need the ropes to wrestle their style anyway.

Next series is from 1/7 to 1/20 with Wayne Bridges, David Finlay, Johnny Londos, Terry Rouge, Barnerd Wright (Steve's brother, known in Canada is Athol Foley), and Mike Branan. All the foreigners will come from Europe.

The reason this past series was able to take place was because one of the New Japan sponsors arranged for a meeting to take place to talk about having a joint show. When it was agreed to negotiate for such a show, the sponsor gave the UWF \$160,000 so they could hold the next series.

After UWF President Nobuo Urata was prosecuted on 11/9 in the case where he threatened to kill Super Tiger's former manager Shoji Sogawa, the two groups were scheduled to have a second meeting. When reporters and TV camera men appeared at the meeting, the UWF wrestlers stormed out. As a result, the New Japan sponsor was enraged and demanded they refund the \$160,000. The UWF returned \$48,000 to the sponsor because the remainder of the money had already been used to pay off their debuts.

It is expected that through new sponsorship, this group will last until the summer and will likely fold then. Although Giant Baba has contacted the Japanese wrestlers from this group letting them know they could work for him, the UWF wrestlers insist they'll retire rather than wrestle the more popular wrestling style.

NEW JAPAN PRO WRESTLING

International HC - Tatsumi Fujinami
World's jr. HC - The Cobra

The final standings of the tag team tournament were: 1. Dick Murdoch & Adrian Adonis 23; 2. Antonio Inoki & Tatsumi Fujinami 22.5; 3. Andre the Giant & Jerry Morrow 21.5; 4. Seiji Sakaguchi & Kengo Kimura 13; 5. tie between Kerry Brown & Tiger Toguchi and Strong Machines with 8; 7. Hulk Hogan and Samoan #3 0.

Hogan left Japan on 11/18 after only appearing one match in which he bladed himself badly and eventually he and Samoan #3 lost to Antonio Inoki & Tatsumi Fujinami. It was announced he had suffered a severe head injury and was going home to Tampa to recuperate. Actually he was recuperating from his knee injury but most Japanese fans were didn't buy the story and instead believed Hulk was appearing throughout the WWF area (which in fact, he wasn't). Hogan's reputation in Japan which was pretty good as he was rated No. 3 in the popularity poll among foreign wrestlers behind only Stan Hansen and Bruiser Brody, was tarnished badly. A taped interview with Hiro Matsuda and Hogan was shown, done in Tampa, in early December.

Anyway, as mentioned previously, Inoki & Fujinami won the 12/5 Osaka championship battle of the top two teams. The previous meeting of the teams on 11/23 in Kumamoto went to a 30:00 draw. Inoki & Fujinami did lose 11/26 in Sendai to Andre & Morrow in a 10:34 match in which Andre never tagged out of the ring and he pinned Fujinami. Of the ten shows reported to me during this series, five were sellouts with the largest crowd being 11,500 in Nagoya on 11/30 for the bout where Inoki & Fujinami downed the Strong Machines when Inoki pinned #2 with an enzuigiri after Fujinami had destroyed #1 with a fullnelson into a german suplex.

This group toured the Philippines and drew 23,000 in Quezon City 12/8 as Inoki double count out Andre in 12:12 in a bout where Inoki slammed Andre. Adonis & Murdoch kept their WWF tag belts winning over Fujinami & Kimura when Adonis pinned Kimura in 18:19. The next night before 8,300 in Manila saw Fujinami pin Adonis to keep his Int. title while Inoki & Sakaguchi downed Andre & Murdoch.

The next series from 1/1 until 2/7 looks to be pretty bad because of weak foreign talent. Hulk Hogan will appear the first and last week of the series, while Abdullah the Butcher appears the three middle weeks. Also Samoan #3, Mike Sharpe, Kerry Brown, King Kong Bundy, Black Tiger, David Morgan, The Cobra, Tiger Toguchi, the Strong Machines, Hiro Saito and possibly Umanosuke Ueda will appear.

An interesting tidbit for collectors of Japanese videotapes is that Riki Choshu and his group, Dynamite Kid and Davey Boy Smith because of contracts signed both with this group and with TV-Asahi (the network which televises the group) are not allowed to be televised by Baba's Nippon TV network. I believe Kid and Smith will be allowed on TV possibly the next series, or if not by the middle of the year. Choshu and company aren't allowed to be televised until 1986. It is thought a deal may have to be worked out by the two promotions before that time because it's going to be very difficult for All Japan to work up exciting TV line-ups without Choshu, especially since fewer foreigners are going to be used in '85. Because Choshu can only be seen live and not on television, I expect All Japan to do every bit as well at the gate for the New Year Series as they did for the tag team tournament. In fact, the series opened with shows 1/2, 1/3 and 1/4 at Korauken Hall in Tokyo and by 12/13, the first two shows had sold out and very few tickets were left for the third night. At the same time, I don't think they can get their TV show moved back into prime-time (their current goal) using Baba vs Tsuruta and Baba vs Singh as main events every week.

The third TV show in Japan, "World Pro Wrestling" which broadcasts bouts from Mexico and the United States on Saturday night on Tokyo TV (also seen via cable in several other large cities but it doesn't have network exposure) may be in for a programming change as well. There have been some problems created because of the Winnipeg matches shown which feature Masa Saito as a "dirty jap" wrestler, not showing any technical ability. Perhaps future tapes will come only from Mexico and maybe one or two different U.S. cities.

PUERTO RICO

WWC HC - Carlos Colon

North American HC - Randy Savage

The big show 12/22 in San Juan drew about 10,000 fans which was considered a minor disappointment. I believe Carlos Colon vs. Bruiser Brody was the main event. Other U.S. wrestlers who were brought in for that card were Jay & Mark Youngblood, Terry & Dory Funk, Dick Slater, Stan Hansen and Abdullah the Butcher.

MEXICO

Recent title changes have included El Gran Hamada winning the N.W.A. World Middleweight crown from Gran Cochise on 11/18 in Mexico City. Cochise had defeated El Satanico on 9/30 in Guadalajara. Satanico then won the U.W.A. World Middleweight crown from Super Astro (who had defeated Hamada who held the title for many years) on 10/14 in Mexico City. El Hijo De El Santo (son of El Santo) won the UWA Lightweight crown from Negro Casas 10/28 in Mexico City while Adorable Ruby won the Mexican Cruiserweight title from Angel Blanco 10/7 in Mexico City.

SOUTHWEST

Southwest HC - Kevin Sullivan

USA jr. HC - Chicky Starr

Southwest TTC - Jerry Olski & Rick Casey

Kevin Sullivan won the Southwest title from Killer Brooks on 12/9 in San Antonio on a show which drew 600 fans. In other main matches on that card Al Madril & Buggy McGraw downed Pierre Lefebvre & Frenchy Martin who have since left the area, Jerry Olski pinned Leo Burke in a loser leaves town match, Little Tokyo (the newest member of the Commonwealth Army) pinned Cowboy Lang when Zarak (Juan Reynosa) hit Lang with a flagpole, then tag champs Eric Embry & Dan Greer went DDQ in a bloodbath with Bob Sweetan & Chicky Starr while Vinnie Valentino pinned The Mummy.

Olski (who is very powerful in a wrestling sense and the first wrestler from this circuit to impress me in god knows how long) & Rick Casey (billed as Scott's cousin) won the tag straps from Embry & Greer at the Junction in San Antonio on 12/17. Casey, who has been wrestling only a few months, isn't any good at all. His brother, by the way, is living in the San Antonio area running a construction business. He re-injured the shoulder he separated several months ago and may not be returning to wrestling for quite a while. The injury took place originally here and the re-injury on the independent North Dakota circuit.

This group continues in its quest to be more gruesome. At the 12/10 TV tapings Embry, Greer, Starr and Sweetan all showed their forehead cuts from the previous night and also all four of them bladed themselves on each cheek so they proudly displayed fresh wounds in three places and talked about how their upcoming Street Fight (12/23 in San Antonio and around the circuit) will be even worse.

Ox Baker and Tommy Rich will be in for fly-in dates soon while Chief Tapu

and his father Tio may be in as the Legionnaires' replacements.

To borrow a gimmick used in every other promotion, John Boyd now has a personal bodyguard (Zarak/Juan Reynosa). Since Reynosa is well established as a stiff here, they make no bones about the fact Zarak used to be Reynosa. The explanation is that no Mexicans are allowed in the Commonwealth Army, thus he had to change his name and features to show he was no longer a Mexican.

WORLD CLASS

WCWA 6 man TTC - Gino Hernandez & Jake Roberts & Chris Adams

American HC - Kerry Von Erich

Texas HC - Gino Hernandez

Texas TV - Chris Adams

American TTC - Bobby Fulton & Tommy Rogers

The Christmas show at Reunion Arena in Dallas drew 17,000 fans (\$180,000+) as Ric Flair retained the World's title tossing Kerry Von Erich over the top ropes in 18:30 when caught in the claw hold. I'm told the bout was excellent however the fans were most upset at the ending. The consensus was it really hurt the show, which I can understand. They haven't played Flair-Kerry in Dallas since the original title change on May 6, thus they've had almost eight months to come up with a good ending and this was the best they could do. Actually it was announced later in the card that a re-match would be held in the Dallas/Fort Worth area "within two weeks" and the title can change via DQ in that match. In other words, they probably do have a good ending (involving Chris Adams possibly) only they are saving it for the re-match.

With the exception of a surprising result in the American tag title match when Bobby Fulton & Tommy Rogers retained the belts against Jim Cornette's duo of Dennis Condrey & Bobby Eaton via a clean pinfall, the show was "terrible. Other results saw Mike Von Erich & Billy Jack (the latter is now managed by Sunshine) down Gino Hernandez & Jake Roberts when Mike used the claw on Jake; Kevin Von Erich pinned Chris Adams in a lumberjack match which lasted just 5:00; A six man tag team match under Battle Royal rules with each man eliminated having to leave town saw Terry Gordy toss out Scandor Akbar and Missing Link simultaneously to be the lone survivor. Gordy's partners were Buddy Roberts and Chic Donovan while Akbar's third man was known only as Mr. X (it was supposed to be Killer Khan, however Khan left the area after losing a brutal cage match to Gordy 12/7 Dallas); Prelim bouts saw Rip Oliver pin King Parsons and Jose Lothario pin El Diablo Grande (Buddy Moreno), while Kelly Kiniski stopped Buck Zumhofe.

Although the crowd is nothing to scoff at, the failure of a bout they've been building up for eight months (Flair-Kerry) to sell out shows this promotion may be in for some trouble in '85. Although Cornette is a big improvement over Akbar as a manager, having his charges lose via pin the first night in may hurt his effectiveness. Actually Cornette got as good a crowd response at Reunion as anyone except for the main eventers. With the exception of Kerry and Terry Gordy they don't have any baby faces who can put on good matches (Kevin Von Erich is capable, but no longer wrestles more than five minutes per night). Brother Mike remains a black eye to the promotion while Billy Jack has been much, much, much worse than anticipated. On the other side, Cornette and the Express may prove to be effective down the road, but most likely they'll be used mainly in prelims. Aside from Chris Adams, the heel situation is bleak. Hernandez and Roberts have proven to be useless as draws and just as much so in the ring.

The 12/28 show (opposite Vince McMahon's debut show which drew 2,500 fans and a \$22,000 gate) drew a near sellout at the Sportatorium of 4,000 as Rogers won a Battle Royal, tossing out Roberts (Jake). Also Terry Gordy downed Kimala via DQ in a bloodbath when Akbar interfered; Hernandez kept the Texas title pinning Kevin in 5:00 using the ropes; Mike pinned Jake after Jake dominated the entire match; Fulton & Rogers retained their tag belts downing Chavo & Hector Guerrero when Hector was pinned; Zumhofe pinned departing Buddy Roberts and John Mantell drew Kiniski. I was told that this card, especially the Guerrero brothers and the Gordy-Kimala match (see, Kimala has been in at least one good match his career) was "super" and the best Sportatorium show in a long time. By the way every fan entering the door was given a free 8x10 of Mike, Kerry and Kevin.

The fact that McMahon didn't bomb at all as I predicted during the same week that this group drew near full houses both Tuesday and Friday (the Reunion show was about 2,000 seats shy of a sellout, Sportatorium 200 from filled) shows perhaps the speculation that McMahon is catering to almost a completely different audience has some validity. I don't buy the audiences are completely different, but I give McMahon credit for being able to draw from an audience that doesn't usually attend matches even if most hardcore fans can't stand his stuff.

The Friday night Sportatorium crowds are averaging about 2,300 over the past six weeks while the Monday shows in Ft. Worth are barely getting 1,000 on an average week. The 11/19 Ft. Worth show drew 2,200 as Kerry pinned Gino to win the American title, Kerry also won an arm-wrestling match from Butch Reed (supposedly live scorpions were put on each side and whomever lost would be stung by a scorpion) and Reed made it double-trouble losing to Gordy earlier on the card.

The Thanksgiving Reunion Arena show drew 15,325 and it ranged from good to awful, I guess like Christmas. Link pinned Zumhofe in a squash; Fulton pinned Diablo; Donovan beat Akbar-DQ when Khan interfered and then Gordy came in and cleaned house on Akbar and Khan using his cowboy boot. This bout went 7:50 but seemed like a half hour. It was so bad. It would get a negative rating; Stella Mae French pinned Nicola Roberts in a 2:00 match which considering everything may have been the worst main event type match I've ever seen. After 10 seconds, when they realized Stella and Nicola can't even walk inside of a ring, Gino and Mike came out and they brawled outside the ring to call attention away from the girls; Kerry & Parsons over Kiniski & Roberts when Parsons rolled-up Kiniski was a good bout; Mike over Gino-DQ ending with both sets of girls interfering was average, only because I'm extra tolerant of Mike; Chris Adams pinned Kevin after a splash off the middle ropes in 4:25 wasn't good because of its brevity, but both men were great in the ring. When they went at it, they did such a good job that their hatred was believable. Kevin cracked Chris twice in the head with a chair, breaking the chair, and also hit Gary Hart twice with a chair after the loss. Hart held Adams as Kevin tried to monkey flip him causing Kevin to fall alone, shortly before the pin. Adams, by the way, was sporting a discolored eye for about a week after this match because when the chair broke, it splintered near his eye. All in all it was a very good show, if not a good match; Fulton & Rogers kept the tag belts beating Koko Ware & Norvell Austin (thankfully departed) in a 14:00 match which contained good effort from all four but some terrible timing and execution. All balanced out it was an average match; The saving grace was the Terry Gordy-Killer Khan death match, with five falls and the blood flying. Bout was both brutal and excellent. After the match Akbar and Link interfered attacking Gordy, and referee Kerry Von Erich helped Gordy chase the heels away.

The best part of the entire card occurred after the match, when Kerry went to shake Gordy's hand, and Gordy shook him off and walked away. Then as Kerry went back to the dressing room, Gordy shouted, "If you've got any guts, get back in the ring." As Kerry came back and was ready to start a brawl, Gordy held out his hand. I'm not sure that makes up for the girls match and Donovan vs. Akbar, however.

The girls (Stella and Nicola) missed the Christmas show, appearing instead that week in Florida where Michael Hayes is the booker. While speculation runs that Gordy will join Hayes there, I'm told it will just be for fly-ins. Gordy is going to remain here at least for a while and establish himself as a singles wrestler. Sunshine's management of Billy Jack is because she is blaming Gino and Jake for injuring Stella Mae. Too bad that isn't true, because that alone would make me a fan of Gino and Jake. This feud looks like another disaster since Mike Von Erich has joined in (four terrible wrestlers combined with one terrible manager) after Jake broke his rookie of the year award Bill Apter gave him on 12/17 in Ft. Worth. Usually in a case like this the heel breaks the award on the babyfaces' head, leaving him bloody. Not with Mike, who can't lose nor taking a beating because they are afraid of the fans' reaction (waking up and realizing he weighs 185 and has not much strength and few moves yet he's whipping guys like Flair). Instead Mike goes wild and Jake and Jake does what I'm told (by three separate people) was the worst and most obvious blade job in history. Anyway, I guess Sunshine makes the second girl hooked up with Chris Adams that winds up with Billy Jack. There hasn't even been a hint of a Sunshine/Adams feud which of course is a natural.

MID SOUTH

North American HC - Brad Armstrong

Mid South TV - Bill Dundee

Mid South TTC - Ricky Morton & Robert Gibson

Starting with the title changes, Brad Armstrong downed Ernie Ladd for the North American title 12/5 in Shreveport in his Mid South debut. Bill Dundee won the TV title from Adrian Street on 11/7 in Shreveport and Street has since left the area after losing loser-leaves-town matches with Terry Taylor. On the tag team scene, Ricky Morton & Robert Gibson lost the belts to Hercules Hernandez & Ted DiBiase on 12/3 in New Orleans, but apparently have regained the belts since that date.

The 11/22 Superdome show drew only 7,500 which ranks as the lowest crowd at the Dome in recent memory. I should mention that the Thanksgiving show last year didn't do any better so they are thinking Thanksgiving isn't a good

night to draw in New Orleans. While that may be partly true, I still maintain the card itself is what is most responsible and this one was weak by 'Dome standards. The main results saw Morton & Gibson down Dennis Condrey & Bobby Eaton in a bizarre tag team scaffold match in a tag title match; Magnum T.A. stop then North American champ Ernie Ladd via DQ; Jim Duggan & Butch Reed over DiBiase & Steve Williams, Street & Miss Linda over Dundee in a handicap match and Chavo & Hector Guerrero over Master Gee & Brickhouse Brown.

The scaffold match saw two scaffolds placed maybe ten feet apart with a connecting board maybe two or three feet wide put in the middle. The scaffolds were 16 feet above the ring. The object was both sides would climb to the middle and the first guy to fall off (Eaton) lost. Obviously a match like this can't be any good and is highly dangerous. While it didn't do well at the Superdome, I'm told virtually the same line-up on 11/25 in Houston drew 12,000.

The 12/3 New Orleans show saw Hernandez-DiBiase over Morton-Gibson, Reed pin Killer Khan, Dundee pin Street, Duggan over Williams-DQ and Ladd over the now-departed T.A. (to the Carolinas) in a cage match.

Another newcomer to this area is Terry Daniels, billed as a member of the Cobra Corps, plus Kimala is in for several appearances. Scandor Akbar has replaced Jim Cornette as the area manager, with a stable of Buddy Landell, Missing Link, Khan (left for Japan since then), Hernandez (now billed as Sheik Hernandez) and associated with DiBiase and Williams. This may seem like a lopsided trade (Akbar for Cornette) but it is one which should help both circuits. I don't have to explain why it will help Dallas, however as I mentioned earlier, Cornette and the Express vs. Express feud had gotten stale in my mind. Akbar is used more correctly in this circuit than he was in Dallas, although he's still of limited use.

I don't have the results of the 12/27 show in Houston which drew just under 10,000; however it was headlined by a two-ring Battle Royal plus a two-ring six man tag (Morton-Gibson-Duggan vs DiBiase-Hernandez-Williams), also Kerry Von Erich vs Rino Hernandez, Reed vs Landell in a shoe shine match and Billy Joke vs Kimala

The changing of Reed took place at the 11/7 Shreveport tapes. Akbar, in signing Landell, gave him a gold watch as incentive to get Reed to join Akbar's group. Landell went to Reed on TV and Reed broke the watch and clobbered Landell, and was eventually attacked by DiBiase, Hernandez, Akbar and Landell before Duggan saved him. Actually the story is a bit more complicated than that, but the scenario, as expected was done extremely well. Landell in particular has done a tremendous job on TV with this group in the past three months. When he and Reed go at it, he makes Reed look like the toughest guy in the world. The funny thing is, I'm told there is disappointment in how Reed is going over as a baby face. The fans hated him so much one would think they'd love him the same amount when he switched, but for some unknown reason which I can't figure out, this hasn't been the case.

Tim Horner is a newcomer. Masked Superstar came in for a few nights losing to Terry Taylor but has since departed. Master Gee (George Welles) suffered more TV defeats before leaving, included losing to a one-legged boston crab against Hernandez.

AWA

AWA HC - Ricky Martel

AWA TTC - Road Warriors

Most of the action around the circuit has been the same, with Rick Martel vs. Jim Garvin headlining (every match has Martel get pinned when Garvin uses an object on him, then Wally Karbo, or in San Francisco it was Leo Nomellini, informs the ref and a DQ gets called). I'm sure these two will continue to feud in January. Surprisingly enough, the matches between the two have been fairly good.

The other headline match has been Road Warriors vs. Fabulous Ones and the bouts have ranged from great to awful to average. The two teams are at least cooperating with one another unlike in their early matches. The bouts mainly end with interference by Paul Ellering in the first match causing a DQ or even a Roadie win; a re-match with the Fabs having a cornerman (either Baron or Crusher in a bow-tie and top-hat) and double interference, DDQ and let's come back with a six-man-tag which is too brutal to contemplate.

The 12/13 San Francisco show (first one after a successful Battle Royal) was down to the normal 1,200 which included those basic matches. A show was then set for 12/29, but canceled and they won't be returning until 1/30.

There has been trouble in Salt Lake City as well. The 11/19 show drew only 3,002 (Larry-Curt Hennig over Bockwinkel-Saito-DQ, Garvin pinned Brunzell, Roadies over Fabs when Ellering hit Keirn with a chair). The 12/9 show drew 4,235 as Hennig pinned Saito (who should be back in Japan before you read this). Martel over Garvin-DQ and Roadies DDQ Fabs setting up the six-man. I don't believe any of the previous Salt Lake shows had drawn less than 5,500.

The Christmas special in St. Paul drew 12,000 (actually near capacity since a Prince Concert was held throughout most of the week and 5,000 seats weren't available to be sold). The Roadies-Fabs ended as expected with Crusher and Ellering getting involved. Actually Crush had problems getting out of his ringside chair. The Martel-Garvin bout went according to hoyle as well, while the other main one saw Bruiser Brody & The Superstar down Greg Gagne & Jerry Blackwell when Brody pinned Blackwell after Sheik Kaissey had given him an object. Interestingly enough, the 12/29 Twin Cities WWF show drew a strong 11,000 with Hulk pinning Sheik, Andre-Mulligan over Patera-Studd and several other results I've since forgotten. The AWA return on 1/13 has Fabs-Crusher vs Roadies-Ellering, Brody vs Blackwell, probably Martel vs Garvin and Crusher-Kaissey vs Gagne-Brunzell. There are hints of a Gagne/Brunzell split but we'll have to wait to see if they go through with it.

Steve Regal had a defense of the useless title he holds (they don't know what weight division it is, we've hear light heavyweight, jr. heavyweight and jr. light heavyweight whatever that last one means) on 12/6 Winnipeg beating TV wrestler Buddy Lane. The first of the six-mans took place that night as Fabs-Crusher over Roadies-Ellering when Keirn pinned Animal. WWF had a show scheduled 12/8 but it was canceled. WWF and AWA had shows in Winnipeg the same week with AWA drawing 7,000 to WWF's 1,000. (early Nov.)

Speaking of the WWF (aren't we always), at their most recent Canadian tapings they've had French announcers so apparently they are going to try the Quebec area again. Ottawa has turned into a failure for them, however.

CENTRAL STATES

Central States HC - Harley Race

Central States TV - Marty Janetty

Central States TTC - Bob Brown & Marty Janetty

The Thanksgiving afternoon special drew 1,600 as Michael Hayes-Buddy Roberts-Terry Gordy DDQ Road Warriors-Paul Ellering, plus Jerry Blackwell on a Battle Royal to give him a shot at Ric Flair the next week. Can you imagine the brains it takes to run a show on Thanksgiving afternoon. It would make almost as much sense to run a show the afternoon of the Super Bowl in the home city of one of the team's at the same time the game is taking place.

The 11/29 show drew 2,200 as Flair beat Blackwell-COR, King Kong Bundy pinned Hacksaw Higgins, King Parsons pinning Missing Link and Mr. Pogo & Gypsy Joe DDQ Bob Brown & Marty Janetty in a tag title match.

On 12/6 they drew 800 with Pogo & Joe downing Mark & Jay Youngblood in a tag title bout when Joe pinned Mark, Janetty pinned Sheik Abdullah in a strap match. . . 12/13 drew 500 as Janetty & Brown kept the tag belts they had won 12/9 in Des Moines over Pogo & Joe. . . The 12/27 show saw Flair vs. Bruiser Brody headline to some sort of DQ ending no doubt. I do know the crowd was 2,700 which is just shy of a sellout.

ST. LOUIS

Missouri State HC - Jerry Blackwell

Only NWA show since last report took place 12/7 before 4,500 with Jerry Blackwell winning a Battle Royal for an alleged \$50,000; Kerry Von Erich pinned Blackwell in a non-title match (Kerry was held out of the Battle Royal) which I'm told was awful in 12:48; Wahoo McDaniel pinned Hacksaw Higgins who subbed for no-show King Kong Bundy; Dick the Bruiser & Bob Brown downed Mr. Pogo & Gypsy Joe; Rufus Jones pinned Sheik Abdullah; T.G. Stone pinned Dusty Wolfe; Steve O & Marty Janetty over Mike Bond & Tug Taylor and get this result--Roger Kirby & Ken Timbs over the Youngbloods when Kirby pinned Jay. Perhaps Kirby being the booker in the Central States area has something to do with that result.

The next card is 1/4 with Ric Flair vs. Bruiser Brody as the headline event, plus Blackwell vs. Kerry in a Missouri title match, Terry Funk vs. Wahoo McDaniel and Harley Race vs. Bob Backlund.

JARRETT PROMOTIONS

International HC - Eddie Gilbert

National HC - title held up

National TV - Ronnie Garvin

Southern HC - Jerry Lawler

National TTC - Bill & Scott Irwin

Southern TTC - The Interns (Don Bass & Roger Smith) managed by Troy Graham

The biggest news here is some behind-the-scenes maneuvering by Jerry Jarrett and Jerry Lawler which has gotten them a decrease in the rent at Mid South Coliseum in Memphis (from 12 to 10 percent of the gate) and has gotten parking lowered to \$1 from \$2.

Basically the problem here is the past few months crowds have been way down. The promotion felt it wasn't a lack of interest in wrestling because the Memphis TV show is the No. 1 rated show in the market (24 rating, 70 share). They blamed it on the \$1 per seat ticket increase they instituted when an entertainment tax was levied by the state of Tennessee. The tax

on wrestling, which had been four percent, became 11.75 percent because of the added tax. Jerry Jarrett went on TV saying the Memphis matches weren't economically feasible and hinted at pulling out of the city. At the same time, for the month of December, all Memphis cards had general admission tickets lowered to \$3 and children were allowed in free as a goodwill gesture to the fans. Then they started a campaign where Jarrett and Jerry Lawler asked fans to start writing government officials to repeal, or at least lower the tax citing the fact that Ringling Brothers circus won't be coming into Tennessee for the first time in 108 years and Lawler felt sorry for "all the kids growing up who won't have a chance to see the circus." Gosh, Jerry, if you weren't so hard on the WWF when they came in, the kids could see the circus once a month.

Anyway, on 12/3 the Memphis crowd with the lower ticket prices was the largest in quite a while (estimated at 9,000) despite a horrid line-up on paper. Main event saw Ric Rude pin King Kong Bundy in a loser leaves town match with Jerry Lawler as the ref. An excellent TV incident was set up with Lawler and Rude getting into it the 12/1 show and Rude going into the parking lot with a chair looking to smash up Lawler's car as he had a few months back and Lawler tackled him in the parking lot and they went into it. This actually established Rude as the heel in this match, but he still won. The Interns won the Southern tag belts from Stan Lane & Steve Keirn when one of them used an object to head-butt and pin Keirn in a bout with a good ending but all in all not very good. Also Bill & Scott Irwin downed Randy Savage & Lanny Poffo (no word, but this had potential to be good even though most reports on the Irwins aren't favorable) to keep their National tag belts, Lawler beat Bob Roop via DQ and Jimmy Valiant pinned Plowboy Frazier (now called Playboy Frazier, more later) who subbed for Kimala who never made any appearances on this circuit.

The 12/10 show saw the crowd drop a little with the same low prices as Lawler downed Rude-DQ when Interns interfered, Irwins kept tag belts over Valiant-Tommy Rich, Randy Savage beat Eddie Gilbert-DQ, Interns over Tim Ashley-Savage. However by the 12/17 show, even with the low prices, the crowd was below 2,000 for this line-up (Rude-Interns vs Lawler-Savage-Valiant, Gilbert defending vs Johnny Wilhoit, Sharpe defending the Mid American title vs Lanny Poffo, Terminators vs Mark & Brad Batten and Tim Ashley & Steve Constance vs Ken Wayne & Danny Davis, the unmasked Nightmares who were de-hooded 12/15 on television). By the way, Rude didn't appear on that card and has since left the area. Actually it doesn't take much to figure out why they aren't drawing and the political and economic reasons aside, the TV show is still entertaining to watch, however I can't see a fan having any incentive to watch a line-up like that. The Terminators (John Voight & Dan Rignati) were the closest things to bodybuilders and to graduation from Eddie Sharkey's camp, but if you've seen them they weren't too close to either. I remain apalled every time I see Ashley & Constance even though in a year I may have to eat my words. Actually Wilhoit, although small, is a capable wrestler and throws the best dropkick in the U.S., however he's been beaten so many times on TV prior to his knee surgery I doubt anyone considered him a threat to Gilbert in a semi-main.

Anyway, after that crowd, Mid South Coliseum officials realized Jarrett truly may leave Memphis. Actually I was told they would just leave the Coliseum except for one show per month, and use a 5,000 seat building downtown for the other three cards. The rent was dropped and parking was dropped from \$2 to \$1, and in turn regular tickets were rolled back from a \$7 top to a \$6 top. They're still working on eliminating the entertainment tax.

Gordon Solie remains as a co-host with Lance Russell on this show much to the chagrin of many fans. Russell's long-time co-host, Dave Brown, a popular local weatherman who has worked this capacity for 9½ years, is now relegated to ring announcing duties. I'm told that during the commercial breaks at tapings Solie gets cat-called by fans telling him to "Go back to Georgia." There was even a petition started at Memphis arena matches trying to get Gordon dumped. Solie being on the show, at least as a try-out, was more or less at the insistence of Ole Anderson. Actually I don't think Solie hurts the show too much, mainly because Lance is obviously the top bannana.

Adrian Street and Terry Taylor were due in on the 12/28 show. Mike Sharpe was given the Mid American title when Kostia Korchenko was done away with. He's since mainly wrestled Poffo.

Plowboy Frazier is now using the name Playboy Frazier, wearing tuxedos and jewelry. They've done several humorous things with Stan. For a few weeks Stan kept complaining about all the phone calls from girls he's been getting and telling girls to quit sending him their underwear. Another week goes by and Stan starts throwing girls underwear all over the studio saying girls keep

sending it to him. Lawler comes out with a package, addressed to Frazier, then opens it with underwear fit for a hippo. Really, it was funny.

On the Atlanta side of the circuit, the 11/18 Omni show drew 7,000 for the tag team tournament. Among the results were: Ted Oates & Rip Rogers over Jerry Oates & Ron Ritchie, Brad Armstrong & Jacques Rougeau over Bob Roop & Gary Quartanelli, Lawler & Valiant over Masahito Ito & Ox Baker, Road Warriors over Ron Slinker & Frank Lang, Irwins over Rich & Randy Savage, Armstrong & Rougeau over Blondes, Lawler & Valiant over Warriors, Irwins over Lawler & Valiant and in the finals Irwins over Armstrong & Rougeau for the supposed \$100,000. Also everyone's pick for worst tag team of '85, Ole & T-Bolt downed the New York Assassins via count out and Ron Garvin DCOR Wahoo Mc Daniel.

The 12/2 Omni show only drew 1,000 with the Blondes over Constance & Ashley, Eddie Gilbert over Jerry Oates, Rude & Rougeau DDQ Dirty White Boys, Roop DCOR Valiant, Garvin pinned Ox Baker (get that videotape to me fast), Lawler beat Jason (Jim Nelson/Boris Zurchoy who appeared as a New York Assassin the previous show) via DQ, The Irwins kept the tag belts beating Rich & Armstrong, and Ole & T-Bolt won the main event over Bundy & Stan Frazier who subbed for Kimala. The most recent Omni was 1/1 with another tag team tournament, on the heels of the 11/18 one. Who can figure it out and why waste time doing so?

Most of the tour spots were headlined by Ole & T-Bolt vs the Terminators. They announced on TV they are headed into Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. shortly. They had a Pittsburgh date but it was pulled on them. The 11/24 show in Columbus which drew 2,500 has Rich over Flair-COR, Ole & T-Bolt over a team called The Assassins, however only one Assassin (Zurchoy) was there and he teamed with Ito.

The 12/31 Memphis show saw the Batten brothers pin Frazier in a handicap match, Interns keep the tag belts beating the Dirty White Boys (Jimmy Hart and Troy Graham are feuding, both are heels, however), Wayne & Davis beat Ashley & Constance in a loser leaves town match (hurray!), Street pinned Wilhoit, Lawler DDQ Gilbert and Sharpe pinned Valiant. The 1/6 show has Sharpe defending the Mid-A strap against Savage and Interns vs. Dirty White Boys.

MONTREAL

International HC - King Tonga

Quebec TV - Sailor Moondog White

International TTC - Rick Valentine & Sailor White

Since the last report Tonga won the title from Dino Bravo and Valentine (Kerry Brown) & White won the tag belts from Ray Rougeau & Jacques Rougeau. Jacques then left and Ray started teaming with Ed Carpentier who according to Norm Keitzer's magazine is 58, same age as Crusher.

They had a big show 11/5 in Montreal drawing 12,123 having Ric Flair pin Ray Rougeau in 30:47 and Rick Martel pin Masked Superstar in 22:38 in a pair of title matches. 11/7 in Quebec City saw Tonga & Superstar over Jos LeDuc & Bravo-COR, Billy Robinson & Ray Rougeau over Valentine & White-DQ. The next Montreal show was 11/26 with Tonga-Superstar-White over Rougeau-LeDuc-Mighty Igor and 11/28 in Quebec City saw Abdullah the Butcher & Tonga beat Robinson & Bravo-DQ, Superstar pinned LeDuc.

Kevin Kelly appearing and losing in prelims here.

FLORIDA

Southern HC - Pez Whatley

Florida HC - Jesse Barr

U.S. TTC - Jim Neidhart & Krusher Khrushchev

The big news is the appearance of Michael Hayes who is now booking the area. Hayes arrived, pretending to be making a quick visit from a recording studio, gave Gordon Solie a present which was destroyed by Krusher Khrushchev & The Saint, and then stayed to team with Dutch Mantell to battle Khrushchev & Neidhart.

I assume Neidhart will be leaving the area shortly since he's billed for WWF appearances starting in February. Then again, Neidhart was billed for WWF shows in Western Canada during November and wasn't there either.

Billy Jack only returned for one week losing to Jesse Barr every night. Barr also "injured" Billy Graham in a TV match so Graham is gone. Barr is mainly feuding with Brian Blair, which should be decent matches. Blair has won several non-title matches via count out.

Sir Oliver Humperdink is gone, with Pez Whatley being given the credit. Humperdink's former team of King Cobra (George Weingeroff with bleached blonde hair) & Mad Max (Scott Ferris) then had several tag matches losing to Whatley & Sweet Brown Sugar (Skip Young).

Rip Oliver was also in for a week, losing every night to Blair. Dusty Rhodes was in on the 12/18 show teaming with Hayes & Mantell to beat Neidhart-Khrushchev-Saint. Bob Backlund only stayed for two weeks.

Koko Ware & Norvell Austin have been in with several wins over the Youngblood brothers who seem to be on their way out. Terry Gordy and possibly Buddy Roberts are expected at least for a few appearances. Stella Mae French and Nicola Roberts wrestled every night during Christmas week for this group. Scott McGhee returned from Japan. Ric Flair was in during the first week of January.

MID ATLANTIC

United States HC - Wahoo McDaniel
Mid Atlantic HC - Ron Bass
Mid Atlantic TV - Tully Blanchard
NWA jr. HC - Dennis Brown
NWA TTC - Dusty Rhodes & Manny Fernandez
Mid Atlantic TTC - Ron Bass & Black Bart

Not much new here although crowds as anticipated have been horrible since Starcade. The 12/8 Greensboro show drew 4,000 which isn't bad at all as Ric Flair pinned Tully Blanchard, Wahoo McDaniel pinned Buzz Tyler, Dusty Rhodes-Manny Fernandez-Kelvin Larson over Ivan-Nikita Koloff-Khrushchev Khrushchev and the best bout saw Ricky Steamboat-Dick Slater over Ron Bass-Black Bart via DQ from what I heard. The next night in Charlotte saw the same matches except Rhodes-Fernandez beat the Koloffs in a cage match. 12/10 Greenville also saw Flair appear, pinning Wahoo McDaniel before 2,000.

Don Kernodle returned for some late December appearances teaming with the likes of Tyler and Fernandez to go against the Koloffs.

Newcomers to the area include Steve Casey, who I know little about, Magnum T.A. and Billy Graham (as a bad guy). Several bunkhouse matches upcoming with Rhodes-Slater-Steamboat vs Bass-Bart-Blanchard.

The crowds for most of the other cards (which haven't included Flair) have been non-existent. In fact I'm told not to be surprised if a few key personnel depart from here shortly.

SOUTHEAST

Southeastern HC - Jimmy Golden
Alabama HC - Porkchop Cash
Continental HC - Bob Armstrong
US jr. HC - Billy Ash
Southeastern TTC - Pat & Randy Rose

Jimmy Golden won the Southeast crown from Austin Idol on 11/22 in Birmingham. Ron Fuller helped his cousin with this one.

A loser leaves town match was held 11/28 won by Mr. Olympia (Jerry Stubbs) over Arn Anderson, however Anderson has since returned because Olympia used the ropes for leverage in scoring the win.

Ric Flair was in on the 12/3 card and went to a 30:00 draw with Bob Armstrong.

OTHER NOTES: Kerry Von Erich didn't get the part in the Movie Rocky IV as Sly Stallone's russian opponent. It went to a Swedish kick boxer. Nikita Koloff was also one of the finalists for the role. . . Everyone will have seen the Roddy Piper incident at the "awards ceremony" by now but first reports are that it was really good. . . 1/1 Los Angeles drew 8,372 for a terrible card as Smirnoff pinned Ken Shephard, Muraco pinned Hanson, JYD pinned Sheik, Jack Armstrong drew Steve Pardee in a 20:00 bout which took only 10:00 normal time, Valentine over Tito-DQ, Rose pinned Strongbow, Richter beat Judy Martin and Snuka-Tonga Kid over Piper-Orton-DQ. The main event was supposed to have been excellent, with Tonga bleeding badly after Piper hit him with a chair. Snuka was barely in the ring the entire match which tells me they are still hiding him. Aside from the main event the bouts ranged from bad to boring to worse. . . 20/20 will be doing a segment on pro wrestling within the next month or two. Eddy Mansfield will be featured. DON'T MISS IT. . . Terry Taylor won the International title in Memphis from Eddie Gilbert on 12/28. . . Kevin & Kerry & Mike Von Erich regained the six man crown from Hernandez-Roberts-Adams on 12/31 in Ft. Worth. Flair comes in to face Kerry with the title changing via DQ on 1/7 Ft. Worth and undoubtedly they've got a good ending for that one. They also have a Star Wars card on 1/28 and I expect they'll run Flair vs Kerry one more time at that one. . . Billy Jack is now wrestling under his real name, Billy Haines, in the Dallas area. He gave an interview where he decided to throw away his gimmick and his cowboy hat and he just wanted to be himself. . . Velvet McIntyre & Desiree Peterson are billed as womens tag champs in the WWF. Princess Victoria (Victoria Tosi) has left the WWF coincidentally at about the same time Don Muraco is returning from Hawaii. Speaking of Muraco, word I get is he's about the same as when he left. . . 1/2 Oakland drew 11,669 as Jerry Monti drew Pardee in a legit 20:00, Welles pinned Smirnoff, Rose pinned Strongbow, Putski pinned Guy Lambert, JYD beat Sheik, Richter pinned Martin, Muraco pinned Hanson, Valentine beat Santana-DQ and Piper-Orton were dq'd vs Snuka-Tonga. I'm told the semi-final was good and the main event was excellent. Next LA is 2/11 but next Oakland is 2/27. . .

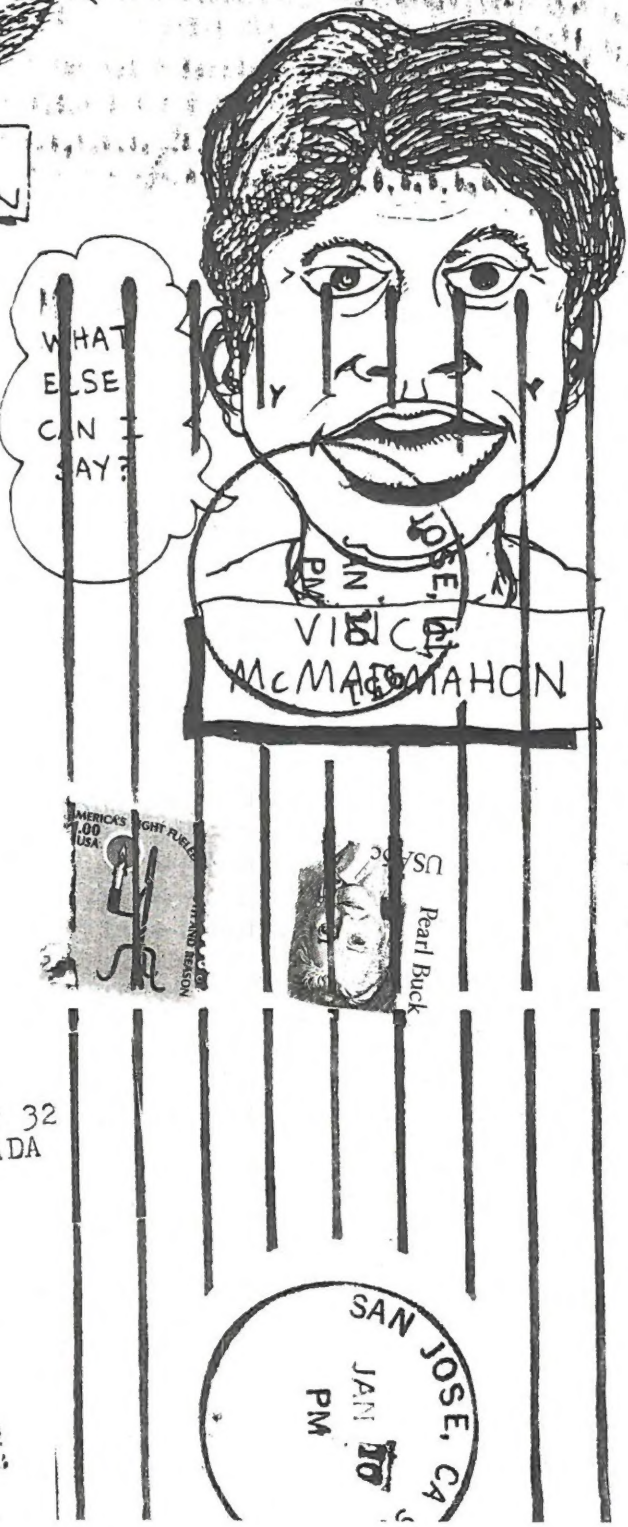
Out Portland way, Bobby Jagers won the Northwest title from Rip Oliver on 12/5 in Seattle. On 12/8 in Portland Billy Jack made a surprise appearance as Mando Guerrero's second in a match with Kendo Nagasaki. Oliver interfered and held Jack for Nagasaki to hit him with the stick but Billy moved and Oliver wound up hit and Oliver wound up carried out on a stretcher in his last night in the Northwest. Billy will return, probably as Billy Haines to wrestle Nagasaki sometime in February in a Kendo stick match. . . Mike Miller has now emerged as the top heel. He got a title shot at Jagers later on 12/8 and was dq'd, but stole the belt. On TV 12/15 he ripped the belt into shreds and used the medal part to bloody Jagers up during an interview. They met in a cage match with Jagers winning on 12/25. They will be re-matched soon with another cage match only with barbed wire on top of the cage. As you can see, they're copying the Southwest promotion. Makes sense to me, to copy a promotion that's on its last legs. Cuban Assassin arrives in January, Tom Prichard left for a few weeks but he's also due back next month. Tio & Tapu have returned as well. . . Miller & Mr. Ebony remain tag champs with top challengers being Don Running Bear (Henry Garcia) & Billy Two Eagles (Relampago Leon). . . Matt Borne returned 12/1 and two weeks later, after losing to Nagasaki 12/15 left for Hawaii once again. . . Humungous beat Porkchop Cash for the Alabama title sometime in late December. The Birmingham 12/25 show saw two cage matches, Robert Fuller vs. Jimmy Golden and Mr. Olympia (Jerry Stubbs) vs. Arn Anderson. The interesting part about the first one is that Ron Fuller will be managing Golden against his brother. . . The Tampa Christmas show drew a near sellout 4,000 for a two-ring Battle Royal which came down to Michael Hayes & Scott McGhee vs. Jim Neidhart & Norvell Austin and Hayes pinned Neidhart for the \$10,000. Hayes & Dutch Mantell downed Krushchev & Neidhart in a non-title match which gave Mantell five minutes with The Saint (Dave Sierra). Saint used powder and had the advantage till the last minute when Mantell used the bullwhip on Saint. Nicola Roberts beat Stella Mae French via DQ in a quick joke when Stella hit the ref. We've got Stella's identity down to one of two ex-female wrestlers, Tanya West or Lorraine Johnson. If it's the latter, then Stella is Nicola's mom. Also on the card was a 6-man which I'm told was excellent as Ware-Austin-Barr over Blair-Youngbloods with Barr pinning Blair. . . Killer Khan appeared at the 12/19 TV tapings and wrestled Blair, getting DQ'd when Barr hit Blair with a cast. Barr was originally set to wrestle Blair but they did the ole "broken arm" trick. . . Tampa's 1/1 show has Flair vs Whitley, Barr vs Blair (who wrestles under the name Mr. B, supposedly given to him by Mr. T) and Krushchev-Neidhart defend against the Youngbloods. . . It's very interesting if Neidhart really goes to the WWF because he's a son-in-law of Stu Hart. Stu's son Bret, of course wrestles in the WWF but is being given no build-up whatsoever. Back in November Dave Smith (Davey Boy Smith) married Stu Hart's daughter Diana Hart, so that makes him a son-in-law and I guess Dynamite Kid becomes a cousin-in-law. As mentioned earlier, Smith, Kid and a few other wrestlers are opening a promotion in Western Canada in mid-February. Certainly McMahon after spending whatever amount it was to get Stu Hart out of the promotion business isn't going to give up Western Canada without a fight. It seems the Hart family may be split up inside the fight. . . One Man Gang headed to Dallas. . . 1/28 MSG has Santana vs Valentine, tornado Snuka-Tonga vs Piper-Orton, Briscos vs Adonis-Murdoch. . . 1/23 card in Queens, New York has Road Warriors vs Gagne-Brunzell, Stan Lane vs Superstar, Keirn vs Kaissey, Backlund vs Ron Bass, midgets and more. . . Interesting tidbits in January's WWF program, one is the ad placed by Moolah ("Girl Wrestling Enterprises" from Columbia, S.C.) recruiting new girl wrestlers. "Send a swimsuit photo and why you want to be a wrestler," and if you've got a better body than Peggy Patterson, you'll be in with Richter in no time at all. . . Another is the story on Ventura, pretty truthful I'm told (I don't read these magazines, I just get third-hand info) about his illness. Jesse's on blood thinning drugs to keep from clotting. According to his doctor, if Jesse bleeds during a match he won't clot and he'll bleed to death. That's pretty scary and quite a sick method for trying to sell tickets, even if it's true. . . The Road Warriors broke Ken Lucas' nose in the dressing room at the recent Pro Wrestling USA tapings in Las Vegas. This came about because a TV bout was held with Lucas & Magnificent Zulu (Ron Pope) against the Roadies saw a massive failure to cooperate on both sides. Lucas, who has been out of wrestling for a year and hadn't been a jobber in a long time, didn't appreciate the Roadies (Hawk in particular) not selling his moves, so of course he stopped selling their moves. Lucas turned his back on the finishing clothesline making the move look very poor, then kicked out of the pin just at three and walked out of the ring like he'd never been hit. The Vegas taping was pretty sharp and the best set of tapes since the series began. It was unlike the AWA to have such a good atmosphere and they had several interviews taped for the Northeast, including one inane one with Von Raschke in a Santa Claus outfit. By the way, the Roadies appear in Japan March 8-15. Paul Ellering actually spoke Japanese in his interview shown promoting the trip. Brody & Hansen will be in Japan at the same time

but I doubt the two teams will meet. . . New Japan opened '85 with a 1/1 Tokyo show as Inoki-Fujinami DDQ Hogan-Samoan #3 when the Strong Machines interfered, also Machines beat Sakaguchi-Kimura and Cobra-Hoashino DDQ Hiro Saito-Umanosuke Ueda. After the card Hulk challenged Inoki to a singles match and Inoki accepted. But then in the dressing room after the card Inoki told reporters he won't wrestle Hulk because Hulk is still injured and not at full capacity. Also he said he wanted the match at Madison Square Garden, Shea Stadium or at the new Tokyo Sumo Hall. (Fat chance on the first two) 1/3 saw Hulk pin Toguchi, Inoki-Fujinami-Kimura over Machines-Hiro Saito via DQ. Strong Machine #3 and #4 debuted this series and all I know at present are they are two very large men, one of which is possibly Shunji Takano. . . Mike Sharpe didn't show up for his New Japan booking as many expected since he quit WWF. . . All Japan opened with sellouts the first three nights at Korauken Hall. They're holding back on the matchmaking, but they've got so much talent they are booking 40 wrestlers per show. By the end of the month they'll be up to 44 wrestlers per show, and about 13 quickie matches with most of them six-man and four mans. Choshu and Hamaguchi did appear on TV beating Tenryu & Motoshi Okuma, so that is settled. However Smith & Kid will not be appearing on TV this series. Lawler & Jimmy Valiant arrive for a week in late January. I can hardly wait because they've never seen anyone like Valiant there. Masa Saito debuts 1/6. 1/2 series opener saw 12 quickie bouts with Baba-Kabuki-Tsuruta over Tsurumi-Singh-Rusher Kimura, Choshu-Yatsu over Ishikawa-Tenryu, Khan pinned Gypsy Joe, Kid-Smith over Hamaguchi-Teranishi (probably the best bout), Tiger Mask-Hamada over Los Brazos from Mexico, plus prelims with Aguayo, Giant Haystacks (billed as 6-foot-11 500 pounds but undoubtedly very poor since he's buried low on the shows), Kobayashi, etc. Top bouts 1/3 saw Tsuruta-Kabuki over Singh-Joe, Choshu-Hamaguchi over Okuma-Tenryu, Smith-Kid over Tiger Mask-Dragon and Inoue-Hamada over Los Brazos. . . Baba will feud with Khan and Kimura the early part of this year. . . The Crocketts have a show 1/17 in Pittsburgh at the 6,000 seat Convention Center with Rhodes vs "Super Destroyer" and the Koloffs vs Fernandez-Kernodle plus they announced Backlund, Billy Graham and Flair "will appear". . . Newcomer to the Carolinas is The Barbarian (King Konga, Tonga John). . . Chic Donovan back in Georgia as a prelim. . . In Southwest, John Boyd is back wrestling. On 12/17 in San Antonio he finally had his showdown with Joe Blanchard in the cripple vs. cripple match, and lo and behold Boyd wasn't crippled after all and destroyed Joe in the match. I don't like some things about Southwest, but a surprise like that I enjoy. The stipulations were that all the wrestlers were to be locked in the dressing room, so Boyd continued to annihilate poor Joe with of all things, the claw hold (they've even got a sense of humor). Anyway, Scott Casey, a "retired" wrestler was in the audience and saved Joe. 1/6 San Antonio has Embry-Boyd-Sullivan vs. Scott Casey-Sweetan-Chicky Starr in the main event and Clski-Rick Casey defend SW tag belts against "The Mowery's" supposedly the members of a Polynesian tribe and probably Tio & Tapu. The 12/30 San Antonio show drew 3,000 or so, as Sweetan-Starr beat Embry-Greer in a cage match which ended with Sweetan giving Greer a million or so piledrivers (Greer was left the area) and The Shepherders returned, billed as World tag champs, and were dq'd against Madril & Brooks and during the match they "broke Brooks' leg". . . Interesting the 12/30 San Antonio show for Southwest outdrew the World Class show in the same city which had Kevin Von Erich pin Adams in a lumberjack match, Fulton-Rogers over Guerreros-DQ and Kerry-Billy Haines over Hernandez-Roberts while Gordy pinning Missing Link in a loser leaves town. Flair vs Kerry no DQ on 1/10 plus Gordy vs Rip Oliver, Haines vs Hernandez and Morton-Gibson debut vs Condrey-Eaton. . . 1/1 Tampa drew 3,500 as Flair pinned Whatley in a good match, the Youngbloods won the U.S. tag belts from Khrushchev-Neidhart, Barr DDQ Blair in a bout I'm told was great and the Fla. title is now held up, Mantell pinned Saint in a lumberjack match, the PYTs drew McGhee & Frank Lang (sub for One Man Gang) and Skip Young pinned King Cobra. . . Ric Rude and Missing Link headed to Florida. I believe Rude will be a babyface which would be a tremendous waste. . . 1/4 St. Louis drew 7,500 as Flair beat Brody via DQ in 23:00. It was announced both in the newspapers and the hotline this was a DDQ, but they were mistaken. The ref was ko'd in the same manner he always is when they get together. Chairs were flying and the end came when Flair jumped off the top ropes and Brody stuck a chair in his way, ko-ing Ric. The ref then draped the belt over Ric's prone body and raised his hand. Told the match was good, but not as good as some of their previous ones. Semi-final was stranger. Blackwell was to defend the Missouri crown against Kerry, but Jerry came to the ring doing the broken arm trick. Funny thing was, Jerry was dressed up to wrestle. Anyhow, Tug Taylor was Blackwell's appointed stiff sub, and Kerry annihilated him in all of 4:00 with the figure four Blackwell jumps after Kerry, but unlike the usual results of the broken arm trick, Kerry quickly got the advantage and chased JB away in a hurry. Taylor jumped Kerry and Kerry KO'd and pinned him a second time. Blackwell is still Missouri champ. Race drew Backlund 30:00 in a totally scientific match which saw the fans give both men a standing ovation at its conclusion. Some

did so because it was for the most part a great match I'm told. Others did so because they were glad it was over. Wahoo McDaniel pinned Terry Funk in a match were both were very bloody, winning in a shock with a suplex. Also Rufus Jones-Bob Brown over Roger Kirby-Mr. Pogo, Ken Timbs beat Art Crews and they had a six man opener elimination tag with Marty Janetty the lone survivor. They return 1/25 with Flair vs. Kerry no time limit, Wahoo vs. Terry Funk in a death match and Blackwell-Kimala vs. Race-Brody. At least that's what they've announced. This will be an interesting head-to-head test since WWF is in 1/25 (Hulk vs Orndorff, Snuka-JYD vs Piper-Orton, Tito vs Valentine). Both sides should do well, although on 1/20 the local version of the World Class show will show the Christmas Flair-Kerry match which ends with Ric doing a deliberate DQ finish--which may be the same finish as the 25th. . . BOMBSHELL!! It's official, Sgt. Slaughter will be in the AWA starting 1/13. Slaughter will be handcuffed to Sheik Kaisey during the Blackwell-Brody match in St. Paul. Does that mean we'll get a Slaughter-Brody series this spring? Even I may have to start paying attention to the AWA then. . . If you recall a brief mention of the possibility of the AWA leaders buying out the St. Louis Wrestling Club last month, here is the update. Wally Karbo and Blackjack Lanza made an offer to Harley Race about selling his percentage (which in effect would give the AWA a majority interest) but the offer was rejected. Let's tab this one on hold for the time being. . . The result of the 12/27 KC Flair-Brody bout was a DQ on Ric, with the same ending of Flair getting KO'd in the post-match brawl when he came off the top ropes into a chair. Ric tossed Brody over the top ropes to get dq'd. . . Word is the "powers that be" in the AWA are very unhappy with the Roadies, especially since they pulled a no-show for their main event bout 12/30 in Green Bay. There is some talk they would like to rid themselves of the Roadies, but can't figure out how to do it and still make money. It has even been considered to put them in the ring with Backlund & Rheingans to "teach them a lesson." . . . Some upcoming WWF dates include 1/16 in Nashville, 1/15 in Birmingham, 1/19 in Indianapolis (Tonga Kid vs Piper, Hogan vs Orndorff, Windham-Rotundo vs Sheik-Volkoff, Richter vs Martin), 1/25 in Dayton, 1/18 in Houston (Santana vs Valentine, Hogan vs Sheik, Adonis-Murdoch vs Briscos) and 1/23 in Louisville (Hogan vs Orndorff, Santana vs Valentine, JYD vs Rose, Tonga vs Orton). . . Mid South's next Houston show is 1/6 with Armstrong defending NA belt vs Landell, Morton-Gibson vs Guerreras for tag title, Reed vs Kimala and Duggan-Terry Gordy vs DiBiase-Hernandez. Besides Kerry Von Erich and Gino, other Dallas office wrestlers on the Mid South Houston show 12/27 were Rip Oliver and King Parsons. . . Bruiser's promotion in Indy going head-to-head with WWF with Bruiser vs. Wojo in a cage match. Originally they were to have that bout in late December, but decided to use that to combat Vince instead. . . Also an almost head-to-head battle in Cincinnati with Ole coming in 1/25 with a tag team Battle Royal and Vince in the next night. Ole's group announced on TV 1/5 that aside from the royal, the main event would have the Irwins defending against Rich & Abdullah, which is double trouble because 1) Abdullah had already turned on Rich at the 1/2 tapings in Atlanta and it was shown earlier that day on WTBS; and 2) Abdullah is in Japan on the 25th to begin with. Expect Garvin to take Abby's place. Other teams announced are Ole & T-Bolt, Terminators, Adidas & Ritchie, Donovan & Doug Somers and Ted Oates & Rip Rogers. When they first announced the date, they had hinted for two weeks the main event would be Flair vs Lawler, but neither will be there. . . Buddy Roberts debuts in Florida 1/6 teaming with Hayes against Neidhart-Kruschev in a tornado match in Orlando. . . 1/5 Boston saw Tito beat Greg-DQ and Patera-Studd beat Andre-JYD also via DQ. . . 1/13 Atlanta Omni has Patera-Studd vs Andre-JYD, Sheik vs Mulligan death match, Tito vs Greg and a bunch of scrub matches. . . Got some info on the WFIA convention (Peter Lederberg branch) for '85. The confab takes place Aug. 9-12 (Thursday through Monday) in Memphis. The folks in Memphis were extremely cooperative last year and I'm told to expect more of the same. For more info contact Pete at P.O. Box 3632, Norland Branch, Miami, Florida 33269. . . Rocky Johnson and The Samoans likely on their way to a Middle East tour. . . A few bulletin plugs: Mat Results, Bob Closson, 2115 Clifton Ave., Springfield, Ohio 45505 \$2.25 or \$3 for yearbook which includes a listing of NWA, AWA and WWF title bouts for '84. . . Buffalo Backdrop, 149 Redwood Terrace, Williamsville, NY 14221 \$2. . . Mat World, 87 Wexford Dr., Oakdale, NY 11769 \$1. . . Eastern Wrestling News, 605 Edgewood Dr., Circleville, Ohio 43113 \$1.20. . . California Wrestling, 33 Moccasin Lane, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274 \$1.20. . . Pacific Coast Wrestling News, 26-612 Chesterfield Ave., N. Vancouver, BC Canada V7M 2M2 \$1.37. . . Ring Around the Northwest, 870 5th Ave., Seaside, Ore. 97138 50¢. . . Percy Pringle (whoever that is) is the new heel manager in Florida managing the PYTs and Missing Link. I believe he was a TV wrestler around the Central States about 12 years ago. He's doing a Jim Cornette rich-mama act.

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